SAMUEL ROGERS AND HIS CIRCLE

R. ELLIS ROBERTS

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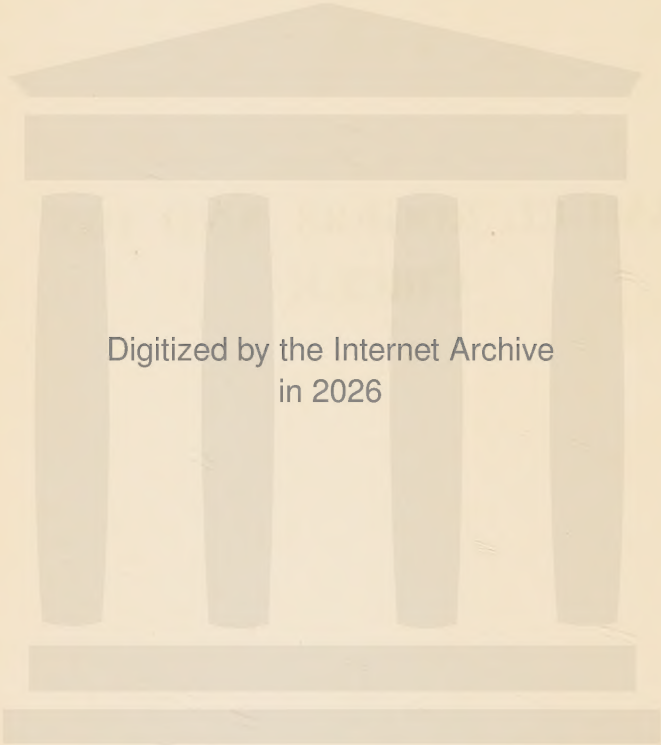

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SAMUEL ROGERS

FROM THE DRAWING BY GEORGE RICHMOND, R.A., 1848, IN THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

SAMUEL ROGERS
AND HIS CIRCLE

BY

R. ELLIS ROBERTS

WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS

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TO

MY DEAR UNCLE

LEWIS H. ROBERTS

BORN JULY 31, 1843 DIED MARCH 15, 1909

PREFACE

MY aim in this book has been twofold.

First I have tried to put together in a convenient form the material about Rogers' life and career. That material is to be found in five volumes:—

1. Recollections of Samuel Rogers. Ed. by W. Sharpe. 1856.
2. Table-Talk of Samuel Rogers. A. Dyce. 1859.
3. Early Life of Samuel Rogers. P. W. Clayden. 1889.
4. Rogers and his Contemporaries. P. W. Clayden. 2 vols. 1889.

Without Mr. Clayden's books mine could never have been written. He has in the three volumes collected an immense amount of information about Samuel Rogers and all his friends. And I have to thank Messrs. Smith Elder for permission to make quotations from the copyright material, letters and so forth printed for the first time by Mr. Clayden. The objection to Mr. Clayden's books is their great length; a good deal of the matter printed is rather lacking in interest, and the whole subject hardly justifies such profuse detail. Still they must always remain necessary for those readers who are making

a thorough study of the period; as necessary as Moore's *Life of Byron*, and his diaries.

Of the other two books, the *Recollections* and the *Table-Talk*, I have made copious use. The first is, of course, indispensable as Rogers' own record of many of his prominent friends; and it seemed to me better to quote freely from the *Recollections* rather than to alter Rogers' language. As to Dyce, I was rather doubtful. A good deal of discredit was thrown upon the *Table-Talk* at the time it was published; but I cannot find any evidence that Dyce was not both honest and, as a rule, trustworthy. When he has been proved to differ from other recorded accounts of Rogers' conversation, the differences are so minute as to be scarcely worthy of mention. Mr. Clayden, although at times he is rather contemptuous of Dyce's trustworthiness, uses him a good deal; and, at times, seems to rely on him exclusively for certain passages in Rogers' life. So I concluded, after weighing the evidence, to use Dyce as a first-hand authority, and as an authority to be trusted; and I have quoted freely from the *Table-Talk* when it gives the best version of a story or an episode.

My other object has been to give an account of the relation in which Rogers stood to the men and to the movements of his age. The difficulty here

was to choose from the enormous amount of material available, and to avoid the more recently-described aspects of the literary and political life of the early nineteenth century. I have purposely dwelt slightly on the Hollands and the political life of which Holland House was the centre; as we have had lately many excellent accounts of that most famous of English salons. Some reference to that life was, of course, inevitable; but I have made it as brief as possible.

My choice of personages to be dealt with has, frankly, been governed by personal preference. It was impossible to include all Rogers' friends; so I have, after consideration, included those who by their character or achievement appeal to me. I hope this confession will disarm those critics who might otherwise expect to find accounts of Campbell, or Cary (of Dante fame), or Turner, or the Greys, or Sharpe the antiquary.

For the rest I have endeavoured first to lay emphasis on the Liberalism of Rogers and his friends, having regard not so much to the actions and plans of political parties, as to the principles that underlay the Whig policy, and actuated the greatest of Whig statesmen. Secondly I have tried to give some idea of the great artistic revolution, the great Romantic revival which possessed English literature

in Rogers' youth and manhood; and to display the principles that were at the back of that revival.

I thought it best to dispose of Rogers' life first, in its main outward incidents; and then to discuss separately the chief literary revivals he witnessed, to appraise his own poetical work, and to tell of his most prominent friends and acquaintances. The plan entails a certain amount of repetition, but I hope it adds to the clearness of the book, and will be found convenient, on the one hand, to readers who merely desire information on Rogers' life, and, on the other, to those who wish to find some discussion of the men and the movements he lived amongst.

I have to thank Messrs. Longmans' for their permission, freely accorded, to make the extracts from Lord Macaulay's letters. Also I owe thanks to my Father, Richard Roberts, for reading the book in manuscript, and for making many valuable suggestions.

August, 1910

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SAMUEL ROGERS AND HIS CIRCLE

SAMUEL ROGERS AND HIS CIRCLE

CHAPTER I

EARLY LIFE

IT does not often happen that one man's life, and that a distinguished life, bridges the gulf between two quite diverse states of society. In such a place as Oxford, it is true, you have men like Dr. Routh of Magdalen, or later Dr. Bellamy of St. John's, who were as full of reminiscences of the old as they were pregnant of plans for the new; but in the narrow life of a University changes are so gradual and circumstances so far more stable that the experience of a long life is, in a manner, almost wasted. Certainly there is no man, with the possible exception of Talleyrand, who lived over a more startling period of change, who lived so near the centre of things, and who made such good use of his opportunities as did Samuel Rogers. His only really distinctive gifts were two, not unusual, but possessed by Rogers to a very high degree, a caustic tongue and a capacity for friendship. It is noticeable how often these two go together. Had we only Swift's works and the records of his quarrels, we should scarcely guess that he was one of the best-loved men of his time; and though Rogers is not at all comparable to

Swift in genius or character, he shares this with him, that he was able, in spite of his capacity for unpleasantness, to make and keep friends. Or possibly it was because of this capacity. After all, do we not exaggerate the bitterness of the witty talker? Are we not led astray by the rather bitter diatribe of St. James, who uses his tongue cunningly and mordantly enough to condemn the very faculty he is exemplifying. With the most of us, inartistic in speech, and unselect in language, the tongue is an unruly member. When passion or contempt supervene, words rush out, foaming, swollen, unconsidered, unsuitable; unseemly language is our lord. But with the great talkers—men like Macaulay, who possessed the average man's capacity for commonplace and his love of fact to a supreme degree, divine wind-bags like Coleridge, divine humorists like Lamb, exuberant and robust fun-makers like Sydney Smith, or neat, incisive wit-purveyors like Rogers—with these, talking was an art. Rogers did not say unkind things to wound; he said them because they were demanded by the course of the conversation, they were the right thing said at the right time; while the sharp, unpleasant rebukes of us minor folk, are the wrong thing said at the right time; a most fatal medicine, producing heat and fever and unhealable scars. Skilled wit is surgical, complete, definite: after a retort from Rogers there is no more to be said.

Of this kind of wit, the wit that was mannered and positive, an excellent instance is the famous retort of Wilkes. That redoubtable champion of democracy was dining with the Prince of Wales. The king's health was given, and George asked him, "How long have you drunk my father's health?" "Ever since I have had the honour of knowing your Royal Highness." It seems in-

evitable : no other answer could quite take its place. Good as it is as a personal retort to the Prince, it is still better as the complement to the Prince's question and its implied sneer. It is wit of this kind which should be encouraged, which no one with any sense of the proportions of things would dream of resenting.

Worthy of recollection then is Rogers for his own sake ; but in his qualities alone, he would take but a small niche in the social history of England, and in the literary history a still smaller. But the circumstances of his life give him justly a considerable prominence.

Firstly, there is his friendship with the greater men of his time : Fox, Byron, Sydney Smith are, perhaps, among his intimates the three most typical men of the great revolutionary and Napoleonic periods.

Secondly, his life, by its mere length, embraces an astonishingly vivid period of social change. Rogers " well remembered one of the heads of the rebels upon a pole at Temple Bar,—a black shapeless lump. Another pole was bare, the head having dropt from it." He was alive when Albert the Good inaugurated the era of peace and commerce at the sign of the Crystal Palace. He went as a young man with a friend to call upon Dr. Johnson ; their courage failed them, and Rogers afterwards told Boswell of that frustrated visit : he lived to refuse the laureateship which, with so bardic an air, Tennyson placed upon his brow. He was at the heart of politics when, save for a few wild adventurers, politics was a war between the great Whig families and the great Tory establishments : he witnessed the birth of the modern labour movement at the time of the Chartist rising. He talked with General Oglethorpe who had shot snipe in Conduit Street, when London was still a small town surrounded by villages : when

Rogers died in 1855 the population of "Inner London" was over two and a half million. He himself was a Protestant Dissenter, when Dissent was still a scarcely-condoned political offence, in the days when the Roman Catholics of England were a small, humble and apologetic body: before his death the Catholic Emancipation Act was passed and the Corporation and Test Acts repealed; and the subtlest English intellect of the nineteenth century had acknowledged the claims of the See of Rome.

While social changes were so significant, those in the world of art and literature were as great. Rogers saw the decease of Classicism, the birth and splendour of Romanticism, and the first signs of that Modernism in art and literature whose end we cannot yet foretell.

In the days of Rogers' youth the Classicism that had been transcendent in English verse for so long was at the beginning of its decay. No vital poetry can ever again take quite the same form that Pope established, and hundreds of imitators followed. For, transforming and bewitching the manner of the classical couplet, came the verse of John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley. But even when Rogers first began to write, the style which lent itself to the themes of Erasmus Darwin was dead: English verse was practically an accomplishment, a little higher than water-colour painting, but to be attempted, as an exercise, by all who aspired to literature. The names of Cowper and Crabbe may be quoted against this generalization; in 1763 (the year of Rogers' birth) Cowper was only thirty-two, and Crabbe only nine years old. These two, however, pioneers as they were, were not strong enough, not wide or deep enough to accomplish the revolution that we associate with the names of Byron, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats. The one real literary and

artistic rebel of those dreary days was William Blake, and he was too meteor-like to lead any party against the Philistines. In the high heaven of his proud soul he damned the schools and the deists, but he expended all his splendid wrath—wrath more like Ruskin's than anything else in English letters—in petty warfare with pigmy opponents, Cromek and such-like. The god-like child of the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, the spiteful child of the foolish epigrams could break away himself from the bondage of the classics, but the path along which he flew was not to be tried by others. He burst through the prison-doors, forcing an exit, but he never damaged their hinges, and they clanged, forbiddingly, behind him.

So, as we shall see, Rogers when he began writing—commenced authorship as they said in his time—followed the traditional ways in verse and prose and produced very mediocre ordinary work. His work, indeed, never became inspired; but before he died, he had witnessed the pulling down of many altars, and the erection of that great Gothic Cathedral of which Scott laid the foundation, Keats adorned the walls, Coleridge the sanctuary, Shelley the spire, and Browning carved the detail of capital and pillar and gargoyle. And in it Rogers himself lit at any rate one candle—his *Italy*.

And besides witnessing the triumph of the Romantic, Gothic, Catholic—call it what you will—Rogers also saw, though I doubt if he realized it, the re-birth of Modernism in literature—or at least in poetry. It is not so easy to say what Modernism is as to define Classicism or Romanticism. The classical mind—in verse, in architecture, in religion—subordinates matter to style, life to rules: you may be dead, if you have died according to etiquette, as Madame of England said—but you must not be incorrect: while,

with the romantic, the matter is suffered to mould its own style, and life forces the rules into strange and beautiful exceptions. Even the Sabbath is found to be made for man. But Modernism is not yet distant enough for us to formulate it: it is too near for understanding. What is it that makes Euripides different from any Greek poet, save for a few nameless nightingales in the Anthology? What is it that thrusts into the mouth of Catullus words for which we would give all the silver splendour of the Æneid, and the heartless sanity of Horace? What is it that makes the humour of Chaucer, the heart-rending simplicity of Bunyan, and the vital interminableness of Richardson so revealing, so astoundingly full of the very sap of human life? I have sometimes thought that this modernist touch is only attained by those who are not professional artists—who follow art not because they wish to, but because they must have self-expression and circumstances make them turn to writing, painting or sculpture. Of the great modernists, Chaucer, Bunyan, Richardson, Byron (if he may be counted), Ibsen, some did and all evidently could have followed other professions. It is difficult, on the other hand, to imagine Tennyson as anything but an artist, or Wordsworth or even Pope. We may say then while the classicist subordinates life to form, and the romanticist makes life mould form, the modernist does not deal with these abstract qualities at all. He is concerned with some particular, some detailed aspect of life; and that must be set down, and set down without any reference to any manner of rule, formula, precedent or what not. . . . It must be born, whether it be beautiful as Aphrodite blown from the sea-foam, or whether it be misshapen, club-footed or dwarfed. Your true modernist in literature rarely has any theory of art; he builds up before your eyes

STOKE NEWINGTON

FROM AN ENGRAVING BY WM. ELLIS

his vivid bits of observed life, builds either in humorous kindliness like Chaucer, or in violent prophecy like Whitman, or in fussy patience like Richardson, or in scientific mysticism like Ibsen; and of his building he leaves you to judge, and you may draw up the rules, and the limits and the formulæ which, quite unconsciously to the artist, have fashioned his art. Of course many authors —indeed all vital authors—have something of this modernist passion, and some whom we may call modernists are only possessed with it at times, but it may be taken, with them, as a symbol of their work—not the desire for beauty, nor even for life, but the insatiable hunger for Truth.

Samuel Rogers was born at Stoke Newington on 30 July 1763. He was the third child of Thomas Rogers and his wife Mary Radford. By this ancestry he could claim a share in both the great English political parties, for the Radfords were sturdy Whigs, whereas Rogers' grandfather in Worcestershire was a Tory, neighbour of George Lyttleton at Hagley, and moving in the heart of Tory county society. However, Thomas Rogers, either through conviction or juxtaposition, or the influence of Mary Radford, quickly sloughed his Toryism and swallowed the Whig doctrines of his father-in-law and his friends. So Samuel Rogers was brought up in that Whig atmosphere, which in the middle-classes was to develop into Gladstonian Liberalism and into who can tell what strange forms under the permeating influence of the Fabian Society and the ubiquity of Mr. Sidney Webb and Mr. H. G. Wells.[1]

[1] To those curious in race we may note that on his paternal side Rogers was of Welsh ancestry; and also of French, for his great-great-grandfather, a Welsh glass-dealer, married a Frenchwoman of Lorraine.

Certainly the chief influence in the family circle at Stoke Newington was that of Dr. Price, preacher to Mr. Hoyle's congregation in the chapel on the Green. He was a man of considerable intellectual power and had a real affection for children. It is true that his intercourse with them was largely of the type immortalized in *Sandford and Merton;* but we must not forget that it is only the sophistication of our own age which finds that type of instruction ridiculous. Children really rather like didactic, improving conversation, and this liking is not at all incompatible with a passion for nonsense, any more than the writing of *Alice in Wonderland* was impossible to the author of *Euclid and his Modern Rivals.* Samuel Rogers remembered Dr. Price with real affection, and recalls particularly how he "would talk and read the Bible to us till he sent us to bed in a state of mind as heavenly as his own."

At the time of Rogers' boyhood—and indeed for years afterwards—Stoke Newington was a village; and the life that Samuel lived there was a village life—that is the life of a village adjacent to a large town—not a town or even a suburban life. The Rogers's were two miles from the edge of London, and at their village they had bathing, and field walks and riding. Of Samuel's early days we have occasional glimpses in his parents' letters; and we know enough to say that there was nothing noteworthy in his childhood. There are, however, occasional touches which show that Mary Radford was a woman of some character. Once when her husband was away in Wales he wrote a letter not to his wife but to Mrs. Price, who conveyed news of him to Mary: whereat Daniel Radford's daughter writes: "It gave me great satisfaction to hear of your health last night from Mrs. Price, but do not accuse me of a recrimination if I say that a line from your hand would have given your

THE ENTRANCE INTO LONDON

FROM AN ENGRAVING BY HAY AFTER THE DRAWING BY SCHNEBBELIE

poor M. R. *a little more self-consequence;* but I know you mean always kind to me, and therefore I ought not to complain." As to the mild word "recrimination," it appears that Thomas Rogers had accused his wife of not writing to him; but there is no evidence that she wrote to other gentlemen and asked them to let her husband know "of her health." If she had, I wonder how Thomas' liberalism would have stood it; but, then, in spite of Mary Wortley Montagu and Mary Wollstonecraft (then a girl) it was not yet the time for feminism: there was liberty (for some) and fraternity (for a few—who could stand it); but equality—that was a sensitive plant not yet trusted to all masculine gardeners.

Samuel Rogers lost his mother when he was thirteen: she died in 1776, only forty-two years old: but she had borne eleven children in fifteen years and, one would think, was glad to rest. Yet Mary Rogers, with her eleven children, is surely a far higher type of womanhood than certain modern wives who shun motherhood as too tiresome, and wear themselves with other occupations and not only die tired, but live tired and die weary and unhostaged. After all Mary Rogers fulfilled her destiny and led a happy life, and no man or woman can expect more.

It does not seem that Rogers gained more than the ordinary education of the time from the schools he went to. He was too delicate to have gone to a public school, even if his father had had the inclination to send him. He went to different schools, and at the last of his academies, the Rev. James Pickbourne's of Hackney, Rogers formed a lifelong friendship with William Maltby, a relative of Edward Maltby, Bishop of Durham. As his boyhood went on Rogers began to think of his future profession. It is not

surprising that he should have felt a strong desire to become a preacher. The friend of the family, Dr. Price, had become more widely known not only in England, but in Europe and America. His scientific attainments brought him an F.R.S.; and his *Observations on Civil Liberty and the Justice and Policy of the War with America* (published in 1776) had gained him a world-wide reputation. Notwithstanding all this, it was evident that Dr. Price attached more importance to his work in the pulpit than to his political adventures; and this fact influenced Rogers in his desire. Dyce, in his Table-talk, reports Rogers as saying: "In my boyhood, my father one day called me and my brothers into his room, and asked us each what professions we wished to follow. When my turn came, I said (to my father's annoyance) that I should like 'to be a preacher'; for it was then the height of my ambition to figure in a pulpit; I thought there was nothing on earth so *grand*. This predilection, I believe, was occasioned chiefly by the admiration I felt for Dr. Price and his preaching." It appears that Rogers got as far as making some preparation for entering Warrington Academy; but then, either persuaded by his father's disapprobation or convinced that he had not the talent for "preaching," he took a younger son's place and went into the Bank in which his father was a partner. This going into business does not appear to have been uncongenial, and there is really no reason why it should. Rogers never had anything that could be called the poetic temperament. He was naturally a careful, regular person whom the habits of a business such as banking would probably suit rather than otherwise. There is no likelihood that he would have been anything but a banker, had it not been that his passion for literature, and still more his passion for people, led him

to devote his time in ways more suited for making acquaintances and pursuing culture. At this time—the year 1780—politics began to interest Rogers. His father was standing as a Whig candidate for Coventry; and after many riots, and no doubt the usual modicum of corruption, was elected with Sir Thomas Halifax. However, the Tories petitioned, and the election committee, Tory in composition, unseated the Whigs and put their own men in. This brief experience of practical politics was enough for Thomas Rogers, who probably returned thankfully to the less actual exhibition of freedom supplied by Dr. Price.

The letters written home in the early eighties by Thomas Rogers after visiting his old haunts in Old Swinford mainly deal with social entertainments and family matters: the only thing of more general interest is his references to the Sunday-school movement which had extended to Old Swinford by 1785.

Meanwhile in his youthful years Samuel Rogers first began to write for publication. Unlike those of most young men his earliest published pieces were in prose; and appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, starting in February 1781. In spite of the praise of Hayward and Dyce it is difficult for the unprejudiced reader to find anything of merit in these early efforts. The influence of Addison as to their matter, and Addison and Johnson as to the style, is so apparent as almost to deprive *The Scribbler* (as Rogers called the series) of any distinct individuality at all. It is not easy to see any particular signs of promise in the work of a youth of eighteen who in 1781 wrote as follows: "Whether she"—(*i.e.* Fashion)—"heightened with a pencil the vermilion of her cheeks or clothed her limbs with a close or flowing vest; whether she collected her ringlets in a knot or suffered them to hang negligently on her

shoulders; whether she shook the dice, waked the lyre, or filled the sparkling glass—she was imitated by her votaries, who vied with each other in obsequiousness and reverence." The chief use the publication of these papers served is that this fact seemed to encourage Rogers in his desire to write, and in 1782 he turned to the writing of verse. His first piece of any importance was a "pretty drama of the sentimental kind," as the manager to whom it was submitted described it, and from the specimens given in Mr. Clayden's *Early Life of Samuel Rogers*, there was nothing noteworthy about *The Vintage of Burgundy—a Comic Opera in Two Acts;* though I do not suppose it was worse than most of its kind; and one song shows that Rogers was not unfamiliar with the songs in Dryden's plays which had followed the traditional manner of the people's love-songs. I quote the last two verses:—

"With such softness he pressed my hands,
Such a kiss enforced his vow,
That I'd hardly strength to stand,
And I looked—I know not how;
While my heart went pit-a-pat.

And when we returned to the green,
So lightly we tripped away,
Such a jig had never been seen,
Since the piper learnt to play;
For our hearts went pit-a-pat."

The manner is there; but the song halts rather woefully, and somehow we don't believe in that soft press, nor in the warm kiss. However, it is hardly fair to criticise this "Opera," as Rogers evidently wished it to die, and the knowledge of its very existence we only owe to Dyce's admirable

dredging powers. Before his next piece is written Rogers has fallen definitely under the sway of that minor master Gray.

It has been argued with some plausibility that Gray and Goldsmith represent a revolt from the traditions of Pope: that may be so. But it is not possible to go on from this and argue that they also represent a revolt from the classical tradition. After all the Nature observed in Gray's Elegy is not much nearer truth than the Nature of Pope's pastorals. Gray had his own decided conventions, and does not, except possibly in a few lighter pieces, approach the realistic truth of Crabbe or the imaginative truth of Blake, the real heralds of the romantic and modernist revival.

So there is no need for surprise that Rogers, in his Ode on Superstition, following Gray dutifully enough, produces something as lifeless and free from observed truth as the Pindarics of Swift. He had not the supreme genius which could turn poetical machinery into a real vehicle of beauty, and his early poems affect one nearly as much as those exercises in the dead languages which are practised at our Schools and Universities. *An Ode to Superstition, with some other Poems*, was issued by Cadell in 1786, and sold for eighteenpence. Rogers paid Cadell £30, and at the end of four years twenty copies had been bought. In the *Monthly Review* for July 1786 a certain Dr. Enfield, a person of some importance in his day, noticed the book in favourable language; and the very terms of his praise would be sufficient condemnation for most lovers of poetry. "The Author," he writes, "has collected some of the most striking historical facts to illustrate the tyranny of the dæmon he addresses, and has exhibited them with the fire and energy proper to lyric poetry." Can we not see the inspiration of the "Gradus" behind the effort of the poet

and the commendation of his critic. But Rogers was yet young, and he could write better stuff than the Ode, which won him the precise praise of Mrs. Barbauld, and the judicious patronage of Thomas Warton, Poet Laureate. In six lines, dated 1786, he shows something of that slight, yet real, gift for a gentle felicity of language and a genuine susceptibility to emotion, which mark his maturer work. He called the poem " Written at Midnight."

> " While through the broken pane the tempest sighs,
> And my step falters on the faithless floor,
> Shades of departed joys around me rise,
> With many a face that smiles on me no more ;
> With many a voice that thrills of transport gave,
> Now silent as the grass that tufts their grave."

Nor should we be sorry at the exaggerated praise bestowed on Rogers' first book ; for without it he might not have made in later life that definite breach with business which was the cause of adding so distinct a personality to literary and political society at the beginning of last century. For the opportunity to abandon business, however, other circumstances were responsible, though this early literary success must have fanned the desire. Rogers' eldest brother, Daniel, felt no call to the Law for which his father destined him, and after an academic life at Cambridge, settled down in the country as a married man of strong literary tastes and no literary ambitions. He was evidently one of those useful and indispensable men, who form the audience for the great company of literary gladiators : a man trained to appreciate and love books, and possessing the leisure to devote himself to such appreciation. Thus the choice of Daniel, left Samuel, for business purposes, the

second son ; and in 1788, by the death of Thomas Rogers, their father's namesake, Samuel was left the eldest surviving child who had any interest in the Bank. Both Thomas and Samuel had been partners in the Bank since 1784 ; and both seem to have been active members of it. Now, however, old Mr. Thomas Rogers was left with Samuel alone of his family in the business ; for his next son, Henry, was only a boy of thirteen. It seems certain that from this time, when Samuel Rogers realized how independent he might be in monetary matters, he must have considered the possibility of leading that leisured and social life for which he was so eminently suited.

CHAPTER II

"THE PLEASURES OF MEMORY"

ONE effect of Rogers' improved position was evidently to increase the amount of his holidays, and the next three years of his life are chiefly notable for the journeys out of England—one to Scotland, and the other to France.

Scotland, or rather that little portion of Scotland generally travelled over by the English, and Edinburgh in particular, was at this time very full of metaphysicians, philosophers, historians and critics, and possessed besides one incomparable poet. It was in Edinburgh, as Sydney Smith said, that people were metaphysical even while making love. "I overheard," said Smith, "a young lady of my acquaintance at a dance in Edinburgh exclaim, in a sudden pause of the music, 'What you say, my Lord, is very true of love in the *abstract*, but—' here the fiddlers began fiddling furiously, and the rest was lost." Rogers does not seem to have found Edinburgh society too overpowering, and as a young literary man he was glad to meet so many of the lions of the day, though the roaring of the younger ones—through the *Edinburgh Review*—was not to begin till 1802. Among the more considerable people he called upon were Dr. Robertson, Adam Smith, the Piozzis, Henry Mackenzie, author of *The Man of Feeling;* but there is no record of any particularly prominent incident, and in failing to meet Burns he lost an opportunity that was not

to return. It is true that Burns was not in Edinburgh at the time of Rogers' visit; but Rogers pursued his journey as far as Dumfries, and not six miles from there Burns was farming at Ellisland. Rogers saw more of real Scotland than many Englishmen in his tour to Crieff and Inveraray, and he notices in his journal that the people spoke Erse (Gaelic, as we should say), and that a man seemed proud of displaying his English. It is worth comment that he hovers, in his description of the scenery, between the romantic and classical views of mountains. At times there is a reference to "the flowing lines of the mountain summits"; but there is little of that enthusiasm for the hills which mark the great Gothic artists in words or brush. The reader does not feel that Rogers desired any more intimate acquaintance with the mountains. On the other hand, when he was in Wales two years later he comments on the grandeur of the mountainous scenery; and it is evident that in his feelings, while naturally not romantic, as in his poetry, he could not avoid the influence of the great movement then beginning.

Of that movement in literature he was soon to witness the counterpart in actual life in Paris of the Revolution. It is difficult to say whether the French Revolution owed more to letters or letters to the French Revolution. The child of Voltaire, Rousseau and the Encyclopædists, the Revolution inspired and fostered the genius of Coleridge and Wordsworth, Shelley and Chénier: it is not without significance that while the men who were responsible for the spirit that issued in the Revolution were themselves French, that tremendous upheaval had but little artistic influence in France itself. It needed distance and ignorance to turn the Revolution into a theme for ideal liberty and justice and fraternity. But when in 14 July 1789 the Bastille

that scandal and symbol of French monarchy, was shattered by the people, there was not a lover of liberty that did not rejoice in the event. There was no one who did not believe that this was the dawn, none who was not quick to run to the summit to greet the rising sun. It was ignorance, but pardonable ignorance. No one but Burke in England foresaw the horrors of the Revolution; and we must remember that a generation which listened enthusiastically to the boudoir anarchism of Godwin was ill-adapted to judge what real men would do in a real revolution. The friends of freedom in England underestimated the horrors of the régime in France; they underestimated the criminal futility of the Royal Family, and, fed so much by philosophic Radicalism, they knew nothing of the real passions of the primitive man. The whole of the political thought of the day was vitiated by Rousseau's conceptions of social contract and natural men. The spirit of political economy was the spirit of the eighteenth century. It reigned in philosophy, in religion, in poetry and in art. And the Reign of Terror was necessary if only to teach Europe once for all that there was no such thing as the natural man—a person from whom certain obligations might be expected and to whom certain definite duties were due. We know now that what the statesman and the economist and the priest have to deal with is individuals, not even cases, still less types. But it was a lesson that was still in the learning when Samuel Rogers went to Paris at the beginning of 1791 to pay a visit that remained one of the most painful memories of his life.

Rogers' visit was paid in the lull just before the final storm. He left England on 18 January, and appears to have been in France, chiefly in Paris, for about a month. While in Paris he saw Lafayette, the Duc de Rochefoucauld,

l'Abbe Grenat, and Perigord, Bishop of Autun, afterwards Prince de Talleyrand. There is little indication in the journal he preserved that Rogers did not expect the state of society he was witnessing to be permanent. He "did" Paris in the most approved tourist style, going to the theatres and picture galleries and churches, driving out and paying calls. At times there is a more ominous note. He congratulated Lafayette on the quiet and orderliness in Paris; and then he notes Lafayette "made no answer." It was not many months before there was loud enough answer made to the pleasant young English poet, when tumbril and taunts and jeers rang out their retorts in ears that would fain be closed. Again, too, he notes in his diary various remarks made by a friend of his, then resident in Paris, Mr. Keay, such as: "that the people were the most barbarous in the world;" but I am not sure how far Keay, who was evidently a vivacious person, full of gossip, was really keener-sighted than the other English, and how far he wanted to make his friend's flesh creep. It is plain enough that Rogers did not take any great alarm at his prognostications: for the subsequent events in Paris were as great a source of surprise as of horror to him.

During this time, and for five years previously, Rogers had been engaged on *The Pleasures of Memory*, which was published in the early part of 1792. In 1791 Rogers spent a month in Wales, as his physician ordered him to take exercise on horseback. He stayed at Ross and saw Tintern Abbey, visited Raglan, and saw the Castle "a most noble ruin," thence through Newport and Cardiff to Llandaff, where he admired the Cathedral, the old in ruins, "part of it included in the modern Cathedral, a strange medley of Grecian and Gothic." He visited afterwards Swansea, Tenby and St. David's, "a poor village," and apparently

was not particularly impressed by the Cathedral. Finally he arrived at Aberystwyth ; but by an annoying mischance eighteen days are unrecorded in his journal, and we have no impressions of the Devil's Bridge, or of the Williams' place at Cwm, shortly to be visited by John Keble ; or of Hafod, the home of the Johnes, and associated with memories of Borrow. On his way back he came through Bristol and Bath, and while on this part of his holiday he read how the Birmingham mob had kept Bastille day by sacking Dr. Priestley's house and burning his meeting-house. One of the earliest lessons for our English philosophic Radicals, that mobs could not be trusted to be on the side of truth and justice ! Mrs. Barbauld, with whom he had got on friendly terms, writes to him this year inquiring " What have you to say in your defence for rambling amongst fairy streams and hanging woods instead of being at the ' Crown and Anchor,' as you and every good patriot ought to be on the 14th of July ? "

On this day the year before, 1790, the first anniversary of the taking of the Bastille, Rogers had probably been present at a festal dinner at the " Crown and Anchor," at which his old friend Dr. Price had been a steward and a speaker. Since then Rogers had been in Paris, and perhaps, in spite of appearances, his visit there had not left him quite so enthusiastic for Parisian freedom : and so he avoids the 14th in London.

But this is only conjecture, and, anyway, Wales is a vast deal pleasanter in July than London ; and had not his physician ordered him horse exercise ?

Apart altogether from the possible influence of the journey to Paris, there is little doubt that Rogers' interest in politics was personal and hereditary rather than the source of profound conviction and attachment. He took his political

views in fact rather like he (and so many others) take religious opinions: he walked wherein he was born. All his intimate friends, up to this time, were Whigs or philosophic Radicals; and from this time he was to become acquainted with Charles James Fox, by far the most fascinating personage in the political life of England. If it had not been for these two circumstances, his early upbringing and his later friendships, Rogers no doubt would have been as professedly Tory in his politics as he was a Tory by temperament and predilection in all other matters —if to be a Tory is to prefer not to change, and to be sensibly affected by the old, the reputable and the dignified things of life.

Between the publication of *An Ode to Superstition* and the *Pleasures of Memory* was an interval of seven years, during which the only other writing of Rogers was a contribution to *The World*, the forgotten journal of the forgotten Della Cruscans. This was "On a Tear," and was published in 1791 in a reissue of *The Poetry of the World*. *The Pleasures of Memory* was published by Cadell early in 1792: but was sent to the printer in the summer of 1791. This throws an interesting light on Rogers' methods of composition. In his Commonplace Book, as quoted by William Sharpe in the introduction to the *Recollections*, is a table giving the time taken by Rogers on his different poems. He assigns seven years to *The Pleasures of Memory*, that is from 1785 to 1792, the year of publication. And it is evident from this that he did not regard his work as finished until it was actually out of the publisher's hands: and even after that, his most carefully written poems were liable to alteration and improvement. A first edition of 250 copies of *The Pleasures of Memory* was printed and sold out immediately. It had many reviews of the usual jejune abstract kind that

characterised the critical work of the period. The *Critical Review* noticed it twice, and the author of the notice was disappointed that Rogers had not followed up the manner of *An Ode to Superstition*—an excellent instance of critical inability to see when an author was following his natural bent. Still this reviewer had praise for the poem, and *The Monthly Review* was quite enthusiastic. The public appreciated the book even more than the critics. Edition after edition was produced—and before the end of the century more than 7000 copies had been sold: before 1816, when the nineteenth edition was published, this figure was more than trebled.

I will leave for the present the consideration of the literary significance of this success; and simply show now what were the effects on Rogers' life. First the success of the book compelled him to acknowledge its authorship, and take an accepted place as a poet. *An Ode to Superstition* was published anonymously, and its authorship disclosed, as is usual with anonymous works, to those who took any interest in the book. *The Pleasures of Memory* was issued as by the author of *An Ode to Superstition:* but when the fifth edition was issued in 1793 Rogers prefaced it with the verses since always prefixed to all editions of his poems; and to these prefatory lines added his initials. The binder went a little further—probably under instructions from the publisher—and labelled the book *Rogers' Poems.* Possibly Rogers' disinclination to proclaim himself a poet was with better reason than usually inspires anonymity. It must not be forgotten that he was a banker, and when Lord Eldon heard that the book, which was to be found in all drawing-rooms and had been praised by Madame d'Arblay as "that most sweet poem," was by a banker, he exclaimed, "If old Gozzy"—his lordship banked with Goslings—"even

so much as says a good thing, let alone writing, I will close my account with him the next morning." It was not expected that bankers should be poets: and it is a significant thing that in the age when the poet was least poetical, least like a bard, least dependent on the divine frenzy and the rush of inspired thought, in that age he was expected all the more to assume most definitely the erratic character, to go through the world aloof and remote, heedless of mundane things, heedless, at the least, of such sordid things as columns of pounds, shillings and pence. Anyway the public was not to be shocked much longer by the spectacle of a banker cultivating the Muses.

The doors of many houses were opened gladly to the author of *The Pleasures of Memory;* and from this time begins Rogers' acquaintance with some of the most notable people in London. Fox and Sheridan, Parr and Cumberland are names that occur in his diary of 1792 and 1793. Dr. Parr regarded himself, and was commonly regarded by others as the Elisha of Samuel Johnson. In truth he seems to have had all Johnson's occasionally irritating sense, quite unilluminated by any humour or imagination. He wrote a most fabulously fidgety and prosaic criticism on *The Pleasures of Memory* in a letter to Rogers, which the curious may find in Mr. Clayden's first volume. The following is a specimen of his manner and methods. "What do you mean by 'the Sybil's muttered call,' and who is the Sybil? And by 'muttered' call do you mean a call that was given in a muttering tone? To me this is quite enigmatical." Still this tiresome old gentleman was a notable character of the time, and knew many people well worth the knowing; and his heavy artillery was at some times and for certain persons quite effective. It was he who made that crushing retort to Mackintosh, which

Rogers narrated so effectively. "Dr. Parr had a great deal of sensibility. When I (*i.e.* Rogers) read to him in Lincoln's Inn Fields the account of O'Coigly's death, the tears rolled down his cheeks."—James O'Coigly was an Irish priest, hanged for high treason in Penningdon Heath, 7 June 1798.—"One day, Mackintosh having vexed him by calling O'Coigly a rascal, Parr immediately rejoined, 'Yes, Jamie, he was a bad man, but he might have been worse; he was an Irishman, but he might have been a Scotchman; he was a priest, but he might have been a lawyer; he was a republican, but he might have been an apostate.'" It was occasional flashes of war such as that which got Parr tolerated, and made people willing to forgive his being, as Rogers complained, "very tiresome in conversation, talking like a schoolmaster." One day in Rogers' presence Sheridan asked Fox: "Charles, have you read Parr's letter?" "I read it last week," said Fox. "Charles," said Sheridan, "once received a long letter from Parr, to dissuade him from moving the repeal of the Test Act. But as he began with not requiring him to answer it, Charles thought he would go a step further and not read it."

Among other political personages then met was Thomas Paine, the great upholder of the Revolution, the man whose keen acid sense was the solvent of Burke's exuberant sentiment. Rogers was evidently impressed with him, and records an illuminating snatch of his conversation. They were dining together at one William Morgan's, and the memory of Joshua was given as a toast. "I would not treat kings like Joshua," said Paine; "I'm of the Scotch parson's opinion when he prayed against Louis XIV. 'Lord, shake him over the mouth of hell, but don't let him drop.'"

Dr. Priestley, who had suffered in his enthusiasm for the

freedom of France, was also frequently seen at this time. Rogers records a remark of his which illustrates rather glaringly the limits of eighteenth-century liberalism. "The American Indians," says the hero of the Birmingham riots, "must be exterminated; they cannot be civilized." Alas for the dream of the noble savage, and the vision of the state of nature! Anyway the colonists of America appear to have been, generally, with Dr. Priestley in this matter; but the amazing impudence of the assertion is what staggers one to-day. There was but little hidden from the knowledge of the eighteenth century. There is another anecdote, typical of the eighteenth century, associated with Dr. Priestley. He told it as follows. "When I was dining at Paris fifteen years ago, at Turgot's table, M. de Chatelleux—author of *Travels through America*—in answer to an inquiry said that the two gentlemen opposite us were the Bishop of Aix and the Archbishop of Toulouse; 'but,' he said, 'they are no more believers than you or I.'" Also in Rogers' diary for 9 February 1793 occurs the first version, so far as I know, of a story since fathered on more famous people than the Hungarian officer, notably on Bismarck. "Dr. Aikin said that when a Hungarian officer came to London with a letter of recommendation to Mr. Howard, Howard walked the streets with him; and his first exclamation on seeing the wealth and comfort around him was, 'What a fine city to plunder!'"

CHAPTER III

FROM STOKE NEWINGTON TO LONDON

THE year 1793 was memorable in Rogers' life for three things—his father's death, his entanglement in the White Terror, and his decision to have a house otherwhere than in Stoke Newington.

Thomas Rogers had always treated Samuel as a good business man, in spite of his son's poetical aspirations, and at his death his will showed how sincere that trust was. Samuel was left head of the banking-firm, of which he had but lately only been a junior partner ; and his income was practically five thousand a year, a considerable sum for those times. The death of his father—he was only fifty-seven—was quite unexpected ; but Rogers was not slow to take advantage of the opportunities offered him. No doubt friends were ready to point out how much more advantageous for an author it was to live in London than in what was rather a neighbouring village than a suburb. It is also natural to suppose that he would not be sorry to seek out new surroundings. Nearly everything that endeared Stoke Newington to him was now at an end. His younger brother Henry could never have been to him what Thomas was, owing to the much greater difference in their ages ; and most of the friends whom Rogers had made lived far from Stoke Newington, either City-wards or in the West End. However, he broke with his old home only

STOKE NEWINGTON FROM THE NORTH-WEST

FROM AN ENGRAVING BY J. ROBERTS AFTER THE DRAWING BY CHATELAIN

by degrees: in the year of his father's death he took rooms in Paper Buildings, where he lived occasionally for the next six years.

Although Rogers was never an ardent publicist, he never forsook his political friends nor wavered in his allegiance to the Whig party; but an incident in 1794 probably confirmed him in his avoidance of active political work. The course of affairs in France had bred a blind panic in England; and any one who was suspected of favouring freedom, even in her most modest guise, went in apprehension of his personal safety. It seems curious that the people who had dared the wrath of Europe by sending its King to the scaffold should be plunged into such an access of terror when a neighbouring people, under far greater provocation, executed a much less amiable monarch. It is less strange that the hideous excesses, which the guillotining of Louis only inaugurated, should create wild dismay not only in England but in the whole of Europe. Still no degree of red fury in another country can excuse the disgraceful measures which characterized the White Terror in England. One of the first victims was Horne Tooke, an intimate friend of Rogers, and the document he gave the poet is sufficient to show with how little regard to equity his, and similar prosecutions were carried out. The authorities of the Tower—where Tooke was imprisoned—sent him three books found in his writing-table, as he wanted something to read during his imprisonment; these were Locke, Chaucer, and Wilkins' Essay.[1] In the Chaucer—which he afterwards gave to Rogers—among other notes, is the following. It was written with that prim appropriateness characteristic of the man in the margin of the first

[1] *Essay towards a Real Character, and a Philosophical Language*, by Dr. John Wilkins, Bishop of Chester; published 1668.

book of Chaucer's version of Boethius, Philosophy's Consolation.

"Tuesday, May 20, 1794. I began to mark this translation of Boethius, in the Tower, with my pencil, being denied the use of pen and ink. I was apprehended at Wimbledon, Friday, May 16, conducted to the Tower, Monday, May 19, 1794, without any charge; nor can I conjecture their pretence of charge. Mr. Dundas, Secretary of State, told me in the Privy Council, that 'It was *conceived* that I was guilty of treasonable practices.' He refused to tell me *by whom* it was conceived. I offered to be examined *to any extent*, if the Chancellor or Dundas would declare that there was *any* information upon oath against me for *any* treason. The Chancellor said, that I seemed to object to the legality of the *warrant;* but that I might object to that hereafter, in another place." Horne Tooke remarks that he afterwards learnt that at that very moment a bill was brought into the House of Commons to legalize this warrant, and to indemnify the Ministers for issuing it.[1]

Horne Tooke, whose counsel was Erskine, was acquitted. It is worth noticing that one witness in his favour was a Bishop—Richard Beadon, of Gloucester—who was not afraid or ashamed to testify as to the friendship he cherished with the suspected Whig; and we owe it to men like him, and to juries who listened to their evidence, that the terror in England did not precipitate a revolution. While of course Rogers was affected by Tooke's trial, he was far more intimately concerned with the prosecution a year and a half afterwards of a lesser man. This was a Mr. William Stone, who was even more radical than Tooke, a friend of Tom Paine's as well as of Fox, to both of whom he had

[1] *Recollections by Samuel Rogers*, pp. 140, 141; note 2.

introduced Rogers. As to how the case affected Rogers is best told in his own words.[1]

"One morning I was about to mount my horse to ride into London to the banking-house, when, to my astonishment, I read in the newspapers that a summons had been issued to bring me before the Privy Council. I immediately proceeded to Downing Street, and asked to see Mr. Dundas. I was admitted; and I told him that I had come to inquire the cause of the summons which I had seen announced in the newspapers. He said, 'Have you a carriage here?' I replied, 'A hackney-coach.' Into it we got; and there was I sitting familiarly with Dundas, whom I had never before set eyes on. We drove to the Home Office; and I learned that I had been summoned to give evidence in the case of William Stone, accused of high treason. Long before this, I had met Stone in the Strand, when he told me among other things that a person had arrived here from France to gather the sentiments of the people of England concerning a French invasion; and that he (Stone) would call upon me and read to me a paper on that subject. I said, 'You will infect me with the plague'; and we parted. In the course of a few days he *did* call with the paper. After the Government had laid hold of Stone, he mentioned his intercourse with me; and hence my summous. When his trial took place, I was examined by the Attorney-General, and cross-examined by Erskine. For some time before the trial I could scarcely get a wink of sleep; the thoughts of my appearance at it made me miserable."

Extract from *The Trial of William Stone, for High Treason, at the bar of the Court of King's Bench, on Thursday the Twenty-eighth and Friday the Twenty-*

[1] *Table-Talk of Samuel Rogers*, pp. 146–151.

ninth of January 1796. *Taken in shorthand by Joseph Gurney*, 1796.

"SAMUEL ROGERS, Esq. (sworn).
Examined by *Mr. Attorney-General.*

Q. You know Mr. William Stone ?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you know Mr. Hurford Stone ?

A. I have known him many years.

Q. Do you recollect having any conversation—and if you do, be so good as to state to my Lord and the Jury, what conversation you had with Mr. William Stone relative to an invasion of this country ?

A. He met me, I think it was in the month of March 1794, in the street ; he stopped me to mention the receipt of a letter from his brother at Paris, on the arrival of a gentleman who wished particularly to collect the sentiments of the people of this country with respect to a French invasion. Our conversation went very little further, for it was in the street.

Q. Do you recollect what you said to him, if you said anything ?

A. I recollect that I rather declined the conversation.

Q. I ask you, not what you declined or did not decline, but what you said to him, if you said anything.

A. I was in a hurry, and I believe all I said was to decline the conversation.

Q. State in what language you did decline the conversation.

A. I said that I had no wish to take any part whatever in any political transaction at that time ; it was a time of general alarm, and I wished to shun even the shadow of

an imputation, as I knew that when the minds of men were agitated, as I thought they then were, the most innocent intentions were liable to misconstruction.

Q. Did he inform you who the person was ?

A. No, he did not ; I only learned that it was a gentleman arrived from Paris : I speak from recollection.

Q. Did he inform you what gentleman he was ?

A. I do not recollect that he did.

Q. Did he ever call upon you after you had declined this conversation ?

A. He did call upon me a few days after ; and he read to me a paper, which I understood to be written by somebody else, but I cannot say who ; and which went to show, as far as I can recollect, that the English nation, however they might differ among themselves, would unite to repel an invasion.

Q. After you had declined a conversation upon this subject, from motives of discretion, Mr. Stone called upon you and showed you this paper ?

A. He told me in the street he should call upon me.

Q. Had you any further conversation with him at any time upon this subject ?

A. He mentioned at that time that he thought he should do his duty, if, by stating what he believed to be true, he could save the country from an invasion.

Q. Did he ever tell you where this gentleman went to afterwards ?

A. I never had any further conversation with him on the subject.

Q. He never came to consult you about what this gentleman was doing anywhere but in England ?

A. No ; I believe I never met him again.

SAMUEL ROGERS, Esq.
Cross-examined by MR. ERSKINE.

Q. Mr. Stone, meeting you accidentally in the street, communicated this to you ?

A. In the open street.

Q. Not with any secrecy ?

A. By no means.

Q. And you might have told it me, if I had happened to have met you five minutes afterwards ?

A. Very likely.

Q. Have you had any acquaintance with Mr. Stone ?

A. I have met him frequently for many years.

Q. What is his character with respect to loyalty to his king, and regard to his country ?

A. I had always an opinion that in that respect he was a very well-meaning man."

A good reply, that last ! I cannot help thinking that Erskine's question was a little rash ; but no doubt he trusted to Rogers' tact to give an impressive answer. We don't know whether Stone was present at the dinner when Paine disavowed a Joshua-like policy towards kings ; but no doubt he sympathized with his friend's views. And " well-meaning " will cover a multitude of significances.

Stone, like Horne Tooke, was acquitted ; but it may be gathered that Rogers had had quite enough of political work. After all, he was not naturally at all inclined to the practice of politics : like his father he preferred a safe and theoretical Whiggery : and no doubt agreed with the paternal verdict on Horne Tooke, who in 1792 started a subscription for France, that his " politics are more of the bravo than the man of true wisdom." It has been said,

and the statement is precisely accurate, that Thomas Rogers " expresses constant sympathy with the French " ; but such sympathy must evidently have bounds. Any proposal which is in danger of touching the person or the pocket is quite a different thing from sympathy. Nor should Rogers or his father be too much blamed in this attitude ; after all they did remain Liberals, in sympathy at any rate : and so much is to be reckoned to them for righteousness. Even sympathy had its practical value, as Horne Tooke and William Stone had every reason to know.

These years of political trouble and poetical fame saw the beginnings and strengthening of one of Rogers' longest and closest friendships. Richard Sharp was one of those happy and fortunate persons who win the respect and admiration of the great ones of this world, without themselves either desiring or achieving fame. Nearly every literary and political circle has at least one such man—a man who is looked up to by men whom the people esteem highly ; a man whom the public hardly even hear of ; a man who puts his all into influencing the people who write and think and do. Such men are sometimes schoolmasters, like Cory, the author of *Ionica ;* sometimes college dons ; sometimes, more rarely, priests ; sometimes quiet lovers of culture like Richard Sharp. There must have been something exceptional in the man who attracted such different intellects as Sir James Mackintosh, Sydney Smith, James Mill, and Samuel Rogers. The position he held—he was known as " Conversation " Sharp—seems to have been not unlike that of R. A. M. Stevenson, though his own actual work was considerably less than that of Stevenson. What of Sharp's work does remain, while marked with sound sense, is not striking enough to explain his reputation ; and we must be content to take his friends' opinions

as the measure of his true value. After all there is nothing quite so vulgar as the persistent refusal to judge people by real rather than by actual achievements—nothing so perversive of truth as to regard literary production as the only sign of literary culture and ability. The generous man gives himself as much in his intercourse with his fellows as in the writing of books; surely it is as noble a thing, as thankworthy a thing, to inspire the artists of your time as to produce works of art oneself. Certainly it is better to have such a reputation and such friends as Sharp enjoyed than to be contented with the careful culture of third or fourth rate epics or sentimental pastorals.

The friendship between Rogers and Sharp soon became very close, and it was largely due to Sharp that Rogers settled ultimately to live in London. It would seem that there was a freedom of intercourse between them on all subjects; and the only occasions of difference were caused by Sharp's fondness for metaphysical discussion, of which Rogers had a characteristic horror. At times, it is true, Rogers attempted to interest himself in the more abstruse questions that have plagued philosophers; but he did not meet with much encouragement from Sharp. Once when Rogers started a metaphysical subject, Sharp stopped him, saying, "There are only two men in England with whom I ever talk on metaphysics." Indeed, all the evidence of his poetry and his reminiscences go to show that Rogers was quite incapable of deep thought. The following statement is not that of one who had much philosophy: "The three acutest men with whom I was ever acquainted, Sir James Mackintosh, Malthus, and Bobus Smith, were all agreed that the attributes of the Deity must be in some respects limited, else there would be no sin or misery." This saying shows an odd misapprehension of the kind of

faculties that make one inclined to value any one's opinion on such a matter. "Acuteness!"—as though the problem of evil were a problem of logic. Again, Rogers' unfitness for dealing with such questions is sufficiently illustrated by the fact that he should think the opinions of three such men better worth recording than those, say, of Fox, or Sydney Smith, or Rogers' own mother.

It is owing to Rogers' friendship with Sharp that we owe, except for one other authority, all the knowledge we possess of his love-affairs. This knowledge is, indeed, very small; we can guess from his character, as shown in his poems and reminiscences, that Rogers would be susceptible to feminine influence; but it is difficult to picture him as anything but a bachelor. There is about him that curious aroma of the secular celibate, that bachelordom of the soul which is really the creation of modern Europe and modern rationalism. In primitive societies, of course, a bachelor is scarcely imaginable; marriage is as much a matter-of-course as death. When you get a little higher in society, when you get more sophisticated societies and more advanced religions, you are confronted with the phenomenon of religious celibacy—at times with that of religious chastity. But we must not forget that in civilizations that we are accustomed to regard as advanced, in some respects as advanced as our own, progress had only really affected men, with the exception of such a class as the *hetairae* of Athens, or that rare creature, the woman writer. Men of great intellectual capacity, nay men of high spiritual insight, are yet content to regard woman as only the breeder—not even the mother: for Plato would have the parentage of children kept a secret. The true history of Hellas will never be written unless some one has sufficient imaginative sympathy to describe Socratic or Aristotelian

philosophy from the standpoint of Xantippe and Pythias. In spite of such beautiful stories of conjugal affection as we find in the Mahabharata, such as the story of Savitri and Satyavan, it is likely that in the East, too, there was little of what the modern world means by love between husband and wife. With Christianity all this is altered: all the forces of theology, of religion, of devotion conspire to put woman in her proper place. Since Mary has become the second Eve; since the tradition of the Mother to the Beloved disciple; since the vision of the woman crowned with the twelve stars, clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, woman has a new authority. And with this change comes slowly but surely the rise of chivalry, and of romantic love; and with these two comes the end of the old simple, animal relations between men and women. Men of refinement can no longer take a wife like they might take a house or any other convenience. Man insists on, and the woman encourages, the presence of love: and from this demand has arisen the modern bachelor. It is evident that as the conditions of matrimony become more and more complicated, it will be more difficult to become married: scruples, hesitations, doubts, flutterings, quarrels—all the familiar machinery of love-making render the affair of getting married more of a problem. For to selfish, overbearing man, also, the development of woman's personality, her self-possession renders marriage less desirable. Before the sixteenth century women who suffered from this new sentiment in men, could find vocations readily and naturally in conventual life; and men also cherished the religious vocation. I do not mean to suggest that the origin of, or even one of the chief causes of, the permanence of religious communities in Europe was the need to find a life for the unmarried: but merely that the existence of this distinct

and honourable vocation acted as a natural check to the arrival of those two modern types, the old maid and the old bachelor. I cannot here go on to trace further, from these beginnings, the rise of the modern twentieth-century bachelor: that is an event that can be studied in the naïve introspective pages of at least two modern men of letters; but I am glad that Rogers had none of the modern, self-satisfied outlook on life. He was a bachelor, for the best of all reasons, that he could not marry where he wanted. The details are curiously obscure; but it is evident from his letters to Sharp that he was in love; and we know from his recorded remark to Lady Jersey that he regretted his bachelordom. "If I had a wife," he said, "I should have somebody to care about me." Lady Jersey's retort was: "How could you be sure that your wife would not care more about somebody else than about you?" And Lady Jersey certainly had the right to speak on such a matter. It is possible that between the years 1795 and 1801 Rogers was in love with more than one woman: it is certain that it was during these years that he had his romance and that he actually proposed to Lavinia Banks. In November 1797 Sharp writes to ask Rogers his advice. Apparently a friend had died, and, while leaving Sharp all his property, had expressed a desire that he should marry "their only child," presumably a ward. He then goes on to ask Rogers: "Are you determined (without my excuses) to waste your youth as I have done? With all that can invite and satisfy in manners, fortune and character, will you defer the chief scene of life till you must perform it under many disadvantages?"

Rogers' reply to this must be quoted in full:—

"Yes, my dear friend, I am indeed of your opinion (though I fear you were not aware of the full meaning of

your words) that you would be very blamable if you did not do whatever they have desired you to do. I believe I have delicacy, I know I have pride, and yet, were such an alternative placed before me, I think I should not hesitate. But why should I say anything? I was, once, more than pleased with her. I could again, I am persuaded, love her better than ever; and if I have sometimes affected to resent the little sallies of a lively and open temper, it was in order to disguise them to my own vanity as the effects of a pique at the discontinuance of attentions which I am now convinced she never cared for, and has entirely forgotten. If she were to become the wife of my friend I am very sure we should fall desperately in love with each other in a fortnight! So, beware!" [1]

It is difficult to tell from this whether Rogers fancied himself in love with the girl left to Sharp's care; or whether the girls referred to are different. Anyway it appears from Sharp's answer to this letter that something stopped him from following his own desires and Rogers' advice: he did not marry "the only child" of his old friend. Nor does this disappointment seem to have affected his spirits.

Rogers, however, who at this time had been flirting with the Countess of Jersey at Brighton, was evidently still bent on matrimony. The next year, in the autumn, he went again to Brighton and to Worthing. He writes from Brighton describing his social life, and says: "I have more than once found myself alone among six or seven beautiful girls, who paint, play on the harp divinely, who devour the books you recommend to them, who accost you with cette voix argentée de la jeunesse—mais n'importe. . . . Suffice it to say that I have been charmed out of my senses,

[1] P. W. Clayden, *Rogers*, i. p. 334.

and I have made one acquaintance that, I hope, will last for life. Interpret this last expression as you please."

With this last sentence we are left; and we have to do, as did Richard Sharp, and "interpret" Rogers' chatter as we please. All we have to supplement the letters to Sharp is the following story told by Abraham Hayward in his article on Rogers in the *Edinburgh Review*, July 1856:—

"Rogers' own version of his nearest approximation to the nuptial tie was that when a young man he admired and sedulously sought the society of the most beautiful girl he then and still thought he had ever seen. At the end of the London season she said to him at a ball: 'I go to-morrow to Worthing. Are you coming there?' He did not go. Some months afterwards being at Ranelagh he saw that the attention of every one was drawn towards a large party that had just entered, in the centre of which was a lady leaning on the arm of her husband. Stepping forward to see this wonderful beauty, he found it was his love. She merely said: 'You never came to Worthing.'"

There is nothing in Rogers' own recollections, nothing in the indefatigable Dyce; and Mr. Hayward's story is unsupported by any other authority. Still it could easily be reconciled with the fragments we can catch from the letters to and from Sharp. From these we know, what is really important, that Rogers had a love affair.

The only other light that can be thrown on this period is from the following poem, written in 1797, presumably after a refusal:—

A FAREWELL

Adieu! A long, a long adieu!
I must be gone while yet I may.
Oft shall I weep to think of you;
But here I will not, cannot stay.

The sweet expression of that face,
For ever changing, yet the same,
Ah no, I dare not turn to trace.
It melts my soul, it fires my frame!

Yet give me, give me, ere I go,
One little lock of those so blest,
That lend your cheek a warmer glow,
And on your white neck love to rest.

—Say, when, to kindle soft delight,
That hand has chanced with mine to meet,
How could its thrilling touch excite
A sigh so short, and yet so sweet?

O say—but no, it must not be.
Adieu! A long, a long adieu!
—Yet still, methinks, you frown on me;
Or never could I fly from you.

When Dr. Gilpin hinted that there was a personal disappointment enshrined in the poem, Rogers did not contradict him: nor need we.

It is almost certain that the "girl with the silver voice" was Lavinia Banks, to whom Rogers proposed, and who married the Rev. Edward Forster. She was the daughter of Sir Thomas Banks, a sculptor, now nearly forgotten. There is no sort of record why she preferred Mr. Forster, nor can we safely identify her with the heroine of Hayward's story. Still it is worthy of notice that Lavinia married a parson, and that at the time of his courting, Rogers, on his own confession, was flirting violently with Lady Jersey. It does not seem likely that the girl who married Mr. Forster would care about her lover being so intimate with so notorious a person as "Prinny's" Countess. On the other hand, justice to Rogers compels me to suggest that his

refusal by Lavinia may have driven him to seek distraction with Lady Jersey. Perhaps he confided to her his passion for Lavinia: men have done odder things; if so, Lady Jersey retorted as might have been expected in the little sneer I have already quoted. It is curious to think that probably the only person to know the true love-story of the calm Rogers was this clever, blackguardly daughter of an Irish Bishop. Anyway the problem remains: did he seek consolation in the somewhat raffish company of Frances, Lady Jersey? Or did Lavinia hear, by some accident, how Rogers "danced alone with her, rode alone with her, spent an evening alone with her, the last she spent in Brighton"? And hearing this, and no doubt much more, did Lavinia challenge him to deny the stories about that woman and him? And so pride drove her to the Reverend Edward Forster. Well, I'm sure she was a good wife to him. So out go Lavinia and romance from Rogers' life.

Meanwhile his disappointments in love did not prevent Rogers from paying attention to his poetry, or devoting time to his friends. "The Epistle to a Friend" was finished, save for the final polishing, in the autumn of 1797; and was published the following year. It is too derivative in form and feeling to interest the present day. It deals with the old theme of town versus country; and deals with it in the Horatian spirit. Praise of the country over the town generally comes from men who really prefer town-life. Of country-life, in its proper sense, life far from the bustle and attraction of town, Rogers knew nothing: to live in Stoke Newington was no more to live in the country than if he had kept a window-box. The amenities of town, the little civilizations, the gaiety of society were all his either at Stoke Newington itself, or at friends' houses

in town. The poem, which is simply and quietly written, of course pleased his friends who, like him, were satisfied with the rural realities of the pastoral poet. The man who prefers the country does not write versified arguments to convince his friends: he goes to live in the country; or stays there, and occasionally, like all true country-lovers, longs for town. It is not surprising to hear that the composition of this epistle was followed by the sale of his Stoke Newington house. His younger brother Henry, who practically managed the Bank, had moved to Highbury Terrace, where he lived with their sister Sarah—(one hundred and twelve years ago a woman of sense, another sister, could describe Highbury Terrace "as quite a gay place, more like the seaside than anything else!")—and Rogers no doubt felt the inconvenience of having two abodes. So the old house was sold, and Rogers went to live in his chambers.

The closing years of the century have not much that is noteworthy. The most important literary event by far was the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798; but Rogers makes no reference to it, and it does not appear that he was any more forward than the majority of his fellow-countrymen in recognizing the extreme merit of so much of the work in that book.

In the first year of the new century was founded "the King of Clubs"—an institution that gave Rogers further opportunities for going into society. The original founders were a group of friends who had been in the habit of meeting at Mackintosh's house. The best known of these were "Bobus" Smith, John Allen, Richard Sharp and Rogers himself. Its numbers afterwards included Sydney Smith, Lord Holland, Brougham, Porson, Payne Knight, Jeffrey, Luttrell, Hallam, Ricardo and Hoppner. The King of

HIGHBURY TERRACE.

FROM AN ENGRAVING BY J. AND H. S. STORER.

Clubs represents a side of life that has since steadily grown less prominent in London. It is true that wherever you get literary or social groups, you will have what may be called " conversation " parties ; but nowadays no one could found a club for the purpose of conversation ! If we may believe the stories told, many of the club-members elaborately prepared their conversation, their witty remarks, and sharp retorts before the evening of meeting. Conversation was pursued with the same passion with which the Metaphysical Society of the later nineteenth century pursued questions of religion and philosophy ; and in a way such a society as the King of Clubs was a substitute for a literary academy. Most of the members had strong literary taste, and all had literary tastes ; and it says a great deal that in such an association of influential men, the really essential poetry of the period should have met with such foolish and impertinent criticism. The vulgar treatment given to Keats and Shelley, Wordsworth and Coleridge is a measure of the usefulness of even an unofficial academy : what an official academy would have done there is no guessing.

Before settling into his new house at St. James's Place—which was to be his home till his death—Rogers paid another visit to Paris.

He went over at a time when, by the triumph of the Corsican, Paris was the home of nearly all that was best in ancient and modern European art. The galleries of Rome and Florence, of Flanders and Holland had yielded up their treasures ; and every virtuoso seized the opportunity of visiting the glories gathered from conquered countries and assembled in the Louvre.

Rogers went over at the same time as Fox, Boddington and other friends, and in the letters he wrote we have a

good account of the impressions made on him. He met Canova, who was then "to take a likeness of Bonaparte for a colossal statue to be placed in the Grand Square of Milan." Rogers gives a vivid account of his first sight of the great Napoleon in letters to his brother Henry and to a Mrs. Gregg.

"On Thursday last I was present at a very different spectacle, the monthly review of the troops, which were drawn up horse and foot, before the Tuileries, to the amount of about 6000. At eleven, an old-looking plain yellow coach, drawn by six blood bay horses, the coachman and postillion in large cocked hats, attended by many guards, brought up Bonaparte at a great rate to the door of the palace from St. Cloud; and a few minutes afterwards, an English post-chaise and four of the same colour, the boys with silver-laced caps, brought Madame Bonaparte. At twelve, in a plain blue coat with gold epaulets, he mounted his white horse, most richly caparisoned with crimson, and black and gold, and attended by generals and mamelouks, whose rich and grotesque habits heightened the splendour, rode in a kind of managed pace up and down the several files of foot and horse, which were so long and numerous that he must have ridden about a mile. He then returned to the centre within a few yards of me (for I was at the palace window next the door) and the troops marched by in succession before him. It was no sooner over than six or seven well-dressed women (as indeed had been the case whenever he had stopped before) pressed round him with petitions in their hands, which he received, saying something to most of them. He then alighted and on the staircase stopped several times to speak to the officers. I was there alone among the sentinels. His profile is very strong, and his face one dead tint of yellow—but not dis-

agreeable. His eyes are of light grey, and his eyebrows scarcely distinguishable. His head has been said by a celebrated portrait-painter here to be *une tête morte*, but his countenance has a cheerful easy character, and exhibited, when I saw him, no very remarkable degree of thought or animation, though very capable of expressing both. His manners are very simple and unaffected, and he took snuff and scratched his head all day. . . . At his levées he is more inclined to talk than to listen, which is the case you will say with some other great people ; but his manners are very simple and pleasing. . . . His head is the head of a giant. He measures in height but five feet five ; but his hat, when he has left it on the table, as I have been assured by those about him, has moved round the head of the tallest and most robust general in his army. He lives entirely at St. Cloud, which overhangs the Seine, and is fitted up most sumptuously with gold and porphyry and bronze. He travels very fast, attended by guards, in a plain old-fashioned yellow coach and six blood horses, his servants wearing cocked hats, but Me. B.'s carriage is a light chaise and four *à la mode Anglaise*."

When Rogers returned to England he occupied himself with his house. He " composed " it with the same care and attention to ornament that he bestowed on his poems ; or perhaps it would be truer to say that he composed his poems with the same affectionate consideration that he bestowed on his house. It was in an ideal position looking out over the Green Park, and under Rogers' discreet and admirable direction it grew into one of the most admired shrines of culture and leisured literary taste. Every American wanted to see Rogers' house, as he wants now to go to Oxford or Stratford-on-Avon. Here was the last note in real English culture ; and even if there was a little

affectation in the cool classicism of his taste, we must recollect how infinitely better was his mode than the horrible fashion which it needed the genius of William Morris to expel from the houses of London.

We have many accounts of the famous house, ranging from Dr. Burney's in 1804 to that made by Philip Hamerton, who, as did all art-loving youths of the time who could, visited it in 1854. We get an impression of a singularly appreciative dwelling, slightly over-decorated perhaps, not quite sufficiently subservient to the golden rule that requires everything in a house first to fit its purpose, and in so doing to attain its own decorative note. Still it must have been singularly charming, this house of Rogers; and its charm went on increasing as the collector had more money to spend on beautiful things, and achieved yearly an even more discriminating taste.

The good Dr. Burney can only describe it and its in a series of superlatives. Rogers, he writes, "is a good poet, has a refined taste in all the arts, has a select library of the best editions of the best authors in all languages, has very fine pictures, very fine drawings, and the finest collection I ever saw of Etruscan vases; and moreover, he gives the best dinners to the best company of men of talents and genius I know; the best served, and with the best wines, liqueurs, &c. . . . His books of prints of the greatest engravers from the greatest masters in history, architecture, and antiquities, are of the first class. His house in St. James's Place, looking into the Green Park, is deliciously situated and furnished with great taste."

It is not many years since "The Epistle to a Friend" was written; when Rogers sought, in verse, to lure Sharp into "the country." Perhaps if that episode with Lavinia Banks had ended otherwise, he might have remained

faithful to Stoke Newington. As it was, I cannot help feeling that the real antidote to the pastoral pleasantry of that Horatian epistle is to be found here, in the house which Rogers bought from the Duke of St. Albans, and made a lodestone for men of culture and taste for half a century.

CHAPTER IV

ST. JAMES'S PLACE

RESPECTED and admired as Rogers had been since the publication of *The Pleasures of Memory*, that respect and admiration vastly increased after he was settled in St. James's Place. The house, with its furniture and pictures and decorations, was to Rogers as a fitting frame to a beautiful picture, or a precious binding to a rare book. People had learnt to value Rogers' company and conversation ; now they came to see the house as well as its owner. The house was an extension of Rogers' personality ; it was as fully revealing as his conversation, and much more revealing than most of his writing. It was not an accident on, but a real part of, his life ; more part of him than are many men's professions and trades. In consequence of this change in his manner of living, there is a corresponding change in his social habits. He is no longer the seeker, but the sought. He still goes to friends' houses ; of course, he still travels, he still makes new acquaintances. But the great thing in literary society in London is to go to Rogers' dinners and breakfasts. He was that most perfect of all hospitable things, a perfect bachelor host. People tried to secure at their evening parties such stars as Byron or Sydney Smith, or later Macaulay : but to see Rogers properly you had to go to St. James's Place : he was not a genial friar of society like Smith, nor a cynical secular prophet like Byron—he was a place of pilgrimage : and he

was as catholic in his sympathies as the great Confessio in some Roman church. He asked almost everybody he met, if he thought there was anything of interest or value in their persons or their works. And in the fifty years left him he entertained at his table nearly every one of literary ability who had the entrance into London society.

In a life of this kind, mainly spent in London, there is naturally little to record except the making of new friends and the gradual composition of new poems. In 1804 Rogers made the acquaintance, for the first time, of two of the most distinguished of his contemporaries. He went for a tour into Scotland, with his sister Sarah, and on their way they stayed at Ambleside, and rode over to Grasmere; and had tea with Wordsworth and Coleridge. For some reason, not discoverable, Coleridge took a violent dislike to Rogers. Possibly it was just carrying on to the man the dislike he felt for his verse. Anyway he says of Rogers that "if I believed it possible that the man liked me, upon my soul, I should feel exactly as if I were tarred and feathered." Later on, Coleridge overcame this extremity of dislike; but he was never on such intimate terms with Rogers as were Wordsworth and his sister Dora. In Mr. Clayden's *Rogers and his Contemporaries* many letters of Wordsworth are printed, some entirely personal, and some letters of business and some a mixture of news and poetry; and all, as a rule, very dull. For this dullness he must not be blamed, as he declared he made all his letters as dreary and bad as possible, in order to ensure their being destroyed; and certainly those to Rogers might have been burnt without much loss to English literature, though we should have missed some not uninstructive glimpses into the poet's method of business and personal concerns and character. Their chief interest is, I think, to

show Rogers' astonishing readiness to help and advise his fellow-author. No trouble seems to have been too great for him to take in settling Wordsworth's businesses with publishers; and when we remember that he took up similar duties for other authors as well, his singular kind-heartedness becomes the more remarkable. Nothing of any moment resulted from this second visit to Scotland except a renewal of the friendship with Henry Mackenzie—the rather tiresome author of that quietly effective book *The Man of Feeling*. Rogers and his sister paid a visit to Burns' undistinguished grave; and afterwards went on to Glasgow. How many modern visitors to that town would recognize the city from the description given by Rogers of it in the summer of 1803. I quote it, with every apology to all Scotch readers for the terrible statement at the end:—

"Glasgow, a good object, with its cathedral of white stone. The streets very wide and handsome, particularly Argyll Street, multitudes walking along the flagged footway, and coming and standing fearlessly in the midway, not a carriage appearing once in an hour. (Argyll Street) as wide as Cornhill, if not wider, the houses rather low than high, carts very scarce, and barrows not seen at all. Most of the women and girls waiting for their turn at the pumps, which are handsome, and stand beyond the footways. Women also surrounding the milk carts, their earthen and tin vessels supplied from a barrel by means of a plug. Naked feet innumerable among the women and boys. Many barbers' shops, and at each of their doors suspended a basin of burnished brass; many fruit shops, ice, grapes (hot-house) two shillings a pound; hackney coaches but no stand for them; a recruiting party parading with the bagpipe. Saw no coffee houses except the Tontine. Houses of white stone, and in general very neatly built. . . . Girls

with earrings and gilt combs in their hair, without shoes and stockings. Singular cries, not resembling those of London. Walked through the College and round its garden or meadow. At least equal to a second-rate college of our universities. Shops small and poorly furnished. Roofs slated generally."

The life of Rogers had, of late years, become more and more severed from party politics; and an event occurred in 1805 which made that severance, save for a few occasional excursions, almost complete. Since he first knew Fox in 1798 his relations with the great Liberal orator had been most cordial; and towards the closing years of his life, Fox seems to have been very glad of the friendship of Rogers. The sincerity of their friendship had no doubt been cemented by Rogers' attitude towards Mrs. Armstead, whom Fox married, after having lived with her as his mistress. Mrs. Fox evidently turned naturally to the kindly, anxious poet in the time of her distress. Of the friendship between the two men I shall write in a separate chapter; it must suffice to record here the end that came with Fox's death at Chiswick on 13 September 1805. This left Rogers without any friends whose chief interests were politics, unless we except the Hollands, to whom Fox had introduced him. The brilliant circle at Holland House, the pleasant if not the striking character of the host, and the formidable, and at times unpleasant character of the hostess, have been thoroughly discussed and described in many recent volumes. Rogers appears, as far as any one ever was, to have been permanently in Lady Holland's good books: Macaulay called him the oracle of the circle; but all Macaulay's comments on Rogers and the aristocratic circle of his friends are marred by the intolerant arrogance of youth—in Macaulay even more intolerant than usual—and by that

vein of vulgarity which his character never quite lost. No greater snob ever damned a lord than the Whig historian. It is curious in his letters to see how pride at being noticed by men like Rogers or Sydney Smith struggles with his natural instinct to distrust and despise any reputation which has been achieved and acknowledged; and how satisfaction at moving in "high circles" fights with the inclination to despise the frippery of rank and fashion.

Every one knows Sydney Smith's excellent piece of banter: "'How is —— ?' 'He is not very well.' 'Why, what is the matter?' 'Oh, don't you know he has produced a couplet? When our friend is delivered of a couplet, with infinite labour and pain, he takes to his bed, has straw laid down, the knocker tied up, expects his friends to call and make inquiries, and the answer at the door invariably is, "Mr. —— and his little couplet are as well as can be expected." When he produces an Alexandrine he keeps his bed a day longer.'" I haven't any doubt that this was a joke against Rogers and his extreme slowness of composition; and I suspect it was made at the time he was at work on *Columbus*. This poem, which is about the same length as *The Pleasures of Memory*, occupied its author for fourteen years. Diners at St. James's Place between the years 1803 and 1810 used to have little pieces read to them; Rogers corresponded about it at length with Richard Sharp; and he was induced to print most of it privately in 1810; while the final version—it was never really finished—was published in 1812. Just about this time Rogers first became acquainted with a poet who, while he professed the greatest reverence for the school of Pope, was to do more than any living poet by his own practice to shatter the fetters which bound English literature. By a curious irony Byron's invective only served to advertise

the poets he condemned, and his sincere tribute to such work as Rogers' became soon to be regarded as the incense offered as a concession on the altar of a dead god. After the wine of *Childe Harold*, the youth of England did not take kindly to the negus which was all Rogers' Muse could proffer them. For poets and for real appreciators of literature the arguments of Wordsworth, the verse of Shelley, Coleridge, and Keats, may have killed the classical convention : for the general public, the vigorous, rhythmical chatter of Scott, and the heady, exuberant rhetoric of Byron, did far more than anything else in heralding the new age of taste and the new birth of art. Rogers in 1811 gave a dinner-party to Byron, Moore, and Campbell, which was the beginning of the intimate friendship, not only between himself and the first two, but between Byron and Moore : it was, indeed, for them, a dinner of reconciliation, as Moore was not unnaturally aggrieved at Byron's reference to him, and his duel with Jeffrey, in "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers."

When *Columbus* was published in 1812, the *Quarterly*, but recently started, printed an unfavourable criticism by J. W. Ward, which was the occasion of one of Rogers' few epigrams in verse :—

> "Ward has no heart, they say, but I deny it ;
> He has a heart, and gets his speeches by it."

The cruellest cut in Ward's review was an accusation of "extreme haste and carelessness"—a remark that one suspects to have been intended ironically : though Moore, with chivalrous heat, takes it quite seriously as "really too impertinent a humbug." The poem was enthusiastically noticed by Mackintosh in the *Edinburgh ;* Byron expressed his agreement with the reviewer. Whether whipped on

by Smith's satire or not, Rogers was very speedy, for him, over his next poem "Jacqueline." It appeared the next year, in the same volume as Byron's "Lara"; and it is curious to think that Rogers probably fancied he was bestowing a favour on Byron by consenting to this friendly method of issuing their poems together.

With the peace of 1814 Rogers once more goes to the Continent, and on this journey probably first thought of the poem published twenty years later, of which his diary in Italy was the basis. The tour ended rather abruptly by the rumour, soon confirmed, that Bonaparte was out of Elba; and once more, but for a brief time, the Continent was closed to law-abiding Britons, and Rogers hurried home from Florence, via Ostend. After Waterloo, Rogers went over to Paris again in September, following the example of "all London"; and he gives a vivid picture of that city under the allies. Somehow, in this letter to his sister, one does not discern quite the Whig spirit which is noticeable in the days of his intercourse with Fox. The most interesting passage in the letter refers to the removal of the pictures and statues which Napoleon had accumulated.

"Last Sunday," he writes—it was 12 October 1815—"we were at Versailles, the gardens were gay and full of people, the palace still unfurnished, and I don't think you lost much. With regard to the gallery, a subject I don't like to begin upon, it is now only full of picture frames and pedestals, and the swallows are literally on the wing there. Every marble of note, except the Borghese Vase and the Fighting Gladiator, are gone, and every picture, except a small Correggio and Titian. Much difficulty and many repulses we found, while they were removing—even from our own soldiers, to whom our officers often gave instruc-

tions to admit only officers—but now all is thrown open, and the French have full leave to contemplate the wreck, a leave none of the better sort avail themselves of. The French are said to show no feeling; but the melancholy groups assembled for some days before the Venetian horses —till our engineers took them down (for the Austrians did not know how)—would have affected you not a little. The English are very unpopular, a caricature is in circulation of Wellington with large moustaches and a stern countenance, under-written 'M. Blucher,' and it is everywhere said that our officers in the gallery presented their ladies publicly with small Correggios and Raphaels, a tale we contradict to no purpose. . . . I saw Canova out in the open street with the 'Transfiguration,' and 'St. Jerome' of Domenichino, and two other Raphaels, half supported in the dirt, and at a loss how to marshal the Austrian soldiers who were to transport them on their heads, uncovered, to the barracks, where I have been two or three times, and which is a terrible scene of confusion."

In 1816 London society was agitated by the separation between Lord and Lady Byron, and the subsequent exile of Byron. Into the endless questions of the rights and wrongs of that miserable quarrel I do not intend to enter. Rogers evidently sympathized with Byron. And there is extant a dignified letter of Byron's in which he appeals to Rogers against those who accuse him of ill-treating and abusing his wife.

"25 *March* 1816.

"DEAR ROGERS,—You are one of the few persons with whom I have lived in what is called intimacy, and have heard me at times conversing on the untoward topic of my recent family disquietudes. Will you have the goodness to say to me at once, whether you ever heard me

speak of her with disrespect, with unkindness, or defending myself at *her* expense by any serious imputation of any description against *her?* Did you ever hear me say 'that when there was a right and a wrong she had the *right*'?

"The reason I put these questions to you or other of my friends is because I am said, by her and hers, to have resorted to such means of exculpation.—Ever very truly yours, B."

Byron did not keep his correspondence with the care that Rogers treasured his, and we do not know how this letter was answered; but we may believe that Rogers' sardonic tongue was exercised in defending his friend's character against the worst stories which Lady Byron so busily circulated.

In the same year Rogers assisted at a tragedy, even more unrelieved by any glimpse of nobility, than the miserable misunderstanding between Byron and his wife. One evening in May, he and Moore returning to St. James's Place found on the table this note from the author of "The School for Scandal":—

"I find things settled so that £150 will remove all difficulty. I am absolutely undone and broken-hearted. I shall negotiate for the plays successfully in the course of a week, when all shall be returned. I have desired Farebrother to get back the guarantee for thirty.

"They are going to put the carpets out of the window and break into Mrs. S.'s room and *take me*. For God's sake let me see you. R. B. S."

There have been men of letters who have died in more miserable conditions than Sheridan; but surely no one ever, in so brief a life, touched such heights of pride and

prosperity and such depths of degraded and pitiful despair. For a time, after this letter, Rogers warded off immediate danger of Sheridan's imprisonment for debt ; but later on, about a week before his death, the bailiffs were only prevented from seizing him by the threats of the doctor. It is not easy to understand why Lord Holland (who visited Sheridan early in May) and Rogers did not take more effectual steps to make his last weeks easier and more decent : the customary ceremonial atonement for his horrible end was made on 13 July, when, five days after his death, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the antagonist of Hastings, the compeer of Burke in oratory, the first of English comic dramatists since the Restoration, was buried in Westminster Abbey.

In the spring of 1819 Rogers published *Human Life*, the poem which after his *Italy* is the most tolerable to a modern reader. Its publication was rather hurried, as it contained a flattering reference to Byron, who was not in favour in England at the moment ; and whose reputation as a rebel and ill-liver was to be still further enhanced by the publication of *Don Juan*, with "the gall and wormwood of its Dedication." *Human Life* is more personal, more observed, and less studied than Rogers' other moralizing poems ; and it is this which makes it readable. His real gift was undoubtedly observation, as any one familiar with the admirable notes to *Italy* will agree.

In 1821 Rogers went abroad again with his sister and a niece ; they left him in Switzerland, and he went alone into Italy for the winter. On this tour he began to write portions of *Italy*, which he sent home to his sister for criticism. At Bologna he met Byron, whom he had not seen for nearly six years, and together they went to Florence. Thence Rogers went alone to Rome ; and on

his way back to England stayed with Byron at Pisa. A great deal has been made of the record of this visit given in Medwin's *Conversation of Lord Byron* and *Life of Shelley*, who was at Pisa at the same time. The truth is that Byron was not unnaturally somewhat soured by his six years' exile; and he said sharp things in a sharp manner, without intending any real insult to Rogers, or indeed without intending anything particular at all. All the outbursts which Medwin chronicled, and which Rogers used to speak about, were the cry of pain wrung from that proud and sensitive spirit. His own isolation, his exile and ostracism, must have been bitterly brought home by this visit of Rogers full of news from London, news about the society where Byron had once been the star, of the people who cultivated Rogers in order to get the author of *Childe Harold* to their parties. Byron cared far more for social than for literary success; indeed he may have despised his own literary triumph, as being largely a success of scandal; and he was no doubt sincere in thinking and saying Rogers' work was better than his own, just as Shakespeare was sincere in lamenting the absence of "art" from his work, and in envying Ben Jonson or Chapman or some other.

This occasion at Pisa was the last meeting between Rogers and Byron, for in May 1824 the news of his death came to England. Moore heard of it at Colburn's bookshop and hastened to tell Rogers; and in July the two lesser poets attended Byron's funeral: the Abbey that had been open to Sheridan was closed for the poet who had lived a sincerer life and died a nobler death than the man who, as his father said, could find in his own heart the characters of both Joseph and Charles Surface.

In 1822 had been published the first version of the first

part of *Italy*. It was issued anonymously and created very little attention. One reviewer ascribed it to Southey; Wordsworth discovered Rogers' authorship. But the whole plan and method of the poem were not likely to commend itself to a public which was then enjoying the headier achievements of Romanticism.

In 1825 Rogers took part in an event of no little importance for England, and thereby testified to his hereditary and personal interest in the traditions of Liberalism. Campbell broached to Henry Brougham the idea of London University; the project, supported by Mill and Hume, soon came to practical issue. Brougham took the warmest interest in the scheme, and was active in founding the company which should start the University; and shares of £100 at a price of £66 per share, paying interest at the rate of 4 per cent., were issued in 1825. Rogers took two shares, as we learn from a letter of Brougham's; and as many as fifteen hundred shares were placed in what Brougham calls "good hands" before the brokers got hold of the issue. The later history of the enterprise belongs to the educational annals of England; when London University celebrates the centenary of its foundation by the Duke of Sussex on 30 April 1827, I trust the name of Samuel Rogers will find a prominent place among the list of founders and benefactors.

The second part of *Italy* was issued in 1828 with the author's name; but created little interest. Rogers was not unaffected by the signs, unmistakable though not harsh, of the failing public recognition of his work. He collected the unsold remainder; and following the custom of the time, burnt them, instead of sending them to be sold by auction. But he was determined that his *Italy* should win, if not favour and success, at any rate notice.

So, after two years more work, was issued the famous illustrated edition, precursor of many such volumes since, such as the wonderful guinea Tennyson, and innumerable gems of the sixties. The story of the Turner *Italy* has often been told. The bare facts alone need be repeated here. The total cost of production was £7335. "By 31 December 1830, 3959 copies had been sold, producing £4252," while by May 1832, 6800 had been sold; and 648 more copies had to be bought, before the book began to make a profit. The idea and its execution were worthy of the virtuoso and the ex-banker; and the first issue of the *Italy*, with its beautiful engravings, is still valued by the lover of exquisite things. For many it has been, as it was for John Ruskin, the first introduction to the charm, the sunny May-like allure of Italy and its towns. The books, as the figures show, had a success, and Rogers brought out a uniform edition of his poems, in which the engravings are comparable to those in *Italy*. No little part of Rogers' claim to remembrance lies in the opportunity he thus gave to English people to learn something of the work of the greatest of their landscape painters, the most poetic and imaginative of their artists.

With the issue of *Italy* Rogers became, rather definitely, the most conspicuous example of an age that was departing. Fifteen years before, when Byron could still speak of him as the next man of letters to Scott, he was still of some account in the movement of art; although the manner of Byron's praise did, in a way, put him among the classics and so among the past. For who could seriously compare the slow, refined, cultivated Muse of Rogers, with the galloping, innovating, romantic work of Scott? And Byron himself, though he praised the gods of old, was forced by his genius to turn into strange temples and bow before

the Rimmon of the Romantics. It does not seem that the position thus bestowed on Rogers, of becoming rather a "show-piece," a relic, was other than pleasing to him. He had a quiet, steady sense of the value of his work; but he did not overrate it as did Leigh Hunt his, nor regard it with the calm of arrogance of genius that marks Landor's self-appreciation. Also, in spite of his traditional bitterness, Rogers was always ready to remember the claims of youth, even when its brilliance over-shone his, as in the case of Byron, or when it was as tiresome and bumptious as the hard, efficient genius Macaulay.

Notwithstanding his continued interest in men and things the main events in his life which were of real interest to Rogers were the deaths of his relations and friends. He was fated to see many who were his juniors die before him: Scott and Mackintosh both went in 1832, and at the end of the year Rogers lost his brother Henry, and Macaulay records that Rogers was away from a party because "his brother chose that day to die upon." Two years later Coleridge and Lamb, one nine years, the other twelve years younger than Rogers, also died: nothing perhaps makes one so realise the way in which Rogers' career embraced two or even three eras of literary history than the death, before his, of men so intimately associated with the modern spirit in poetry and humour.

Another of the younger generation who met Rogers, about 1838, was Thomas Carlyle; and the gruff Scotsman's impressions, hackneyed as they are, must be quoted: "Old Rogers, with his pale head, white, bare and cold as snow . . . those large blue eyes, cruel, sorrowful, and that sardonic shelf chin." It is evident that Carlyle, rebel as he was, was impressed with the "grim old dilettante, full of sardonic sense"; and when we remember how un-

responsive was Carlyle to mere reputations, and how hopelessly unfair even to greatness that did not agree with him, his tribute is remarkable. There must have been a force of character, trained and controlled, to make this wild prophet of a new age write so definitely of an old poet to the fellow-prophet in America, Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose *Orators* Rogers called "German poetry, given out in American prose." A long procession of visitors is all that strikes us during the rest of Rogers' life, with the exception of two outstanding incidents. Among the visitors were men who became famous and are now nearly forgotten, such as Sir Henry Taylor and F. Goodall; others whose fame was to increase and entirely overshadow not only Rogers' own, but that of all save the greatest of their contemporaries, such as Charles Dickens and John Ruskin, and others, the old friends of the old poet, men like Lord Holland, who died in 1840, Sydney and Bobus Smith, who died five years later, Wordsworth, and Moore. In 1844 Rogers' friends had an opportunity for showing their gratitude for the many kindnesses of the man "who says the most ill-natured things, and does the best." At the end of November the Bank, from which Rogers derived most of his income, was robbed of nearly £50,000, most of it in bank-notes. Fortunately nearly all the money was recovered later, and the actual loss to be borne by the partners was but small. It is pleasant, however, to see how many friends offered Rogers sympathy and assistance. Lord Ashburton, Lord Lansdowne, Sydney Smith, and Lady Grey, all wrote letters, and Lord Lansdowne wanted to transfer his balance —amounting to some thousands—to Rogers' Bank.

In 1850 two more of Rogers' oldest friends died—Jeffrey, who survived till January, and Wordsworth, whose death was announced to Rogers three months later.

HIGHBURY PLACE

[From] AN ENGRAVING BY J. AND H. S. [illegible]

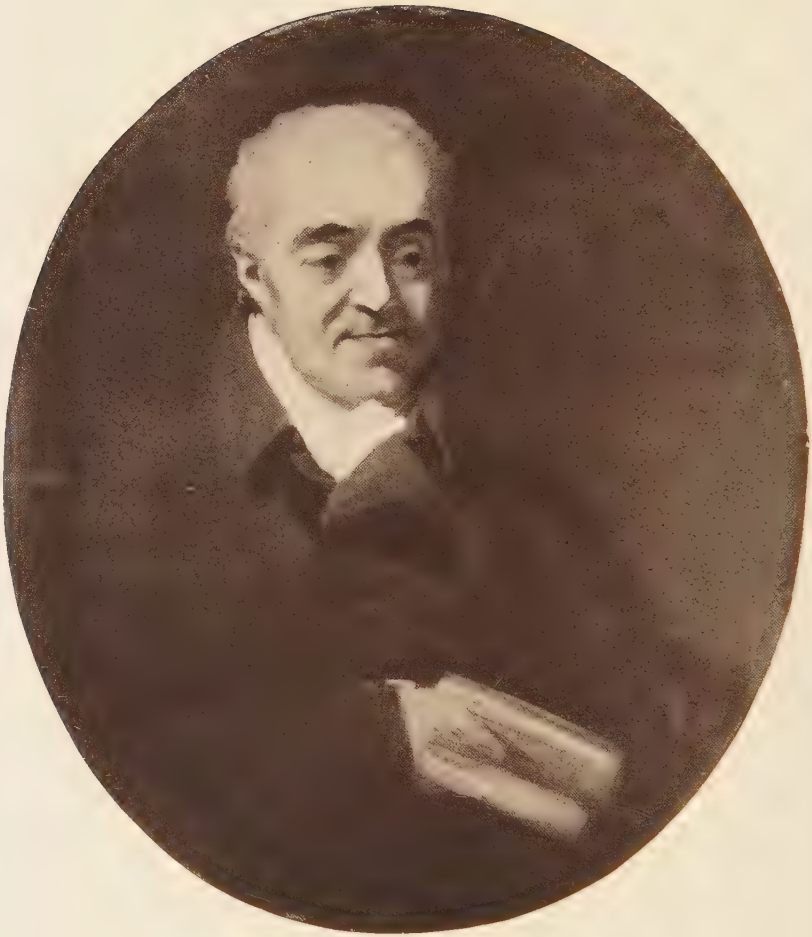
Wordsworth had been Poet Laureate for five years, and his tenure of the post did much to endow it with the honour which it had lost, and was not to recover for so long; on his death there was only one poet writing to whom it could be offered, if the office were to be regarded as the mark of official approbation set not only on poetry, but also on poetry that was emblematic, in tenor and influence, of its day and spirit. Such a compromise is necessary in any "established position"; and no one would want Marlow, or Shelley, or Swinburne to be Poet Laureate. However, those in authority preferred, after Wordsworth's death, to revert to the old tradition of offering the Laureateship to one whose work was accomplished, and whose poetry forms but a small stave in the great song of English literature. Prince Albert wrote in May to Samuel Rogers, on the Queen's behalf, and offered him the Laureateship; his letter says plainly, and with real delicacy and forethought, that there was no intention of "exacting laudatory odes from the holder of the office"; and Rogers is asked to succeed "the lamented Mr. Wordsworth" in "this honorary post." "I can tell you," continues the Prince, "that it will give Her Majesty great pleasure if it were accepted by one whom she has known so long, and who would so much adorn it, but that she would not have thought of offering it to you at your advanced age if any duties or trouble were attached to it."

Rogers had the good sense to decline this offer, and in October of the same year Lord John Russell writes to ask him what he knows of Mr. Tennyson's "character and position." Evidently Rogers gave the necessary certificate of respectability to the author of *Morte d'Arthur, The Princess,* and *In Memoriam;* and Tennyson was made Laureate. To the student of literary manners, it may be

worthy of notice that Tennyson went to court in Mr. Rogers' court dress, which Wordsworth had worn, on a similar occasion, five years before.

Once again in this year Rogers gained the sympathy of his many friends. He was knocked down, on one June evening in 1850, by a passing carriage; and fractured his thigh-bone. The old man of eighty-seven was not, however, any the worse for his accident, except for a slight lameness in his walk; and while he was confined to his room he received many letters of sympathy, information, inquiry, and friendship. So surrounded by kindness, Rogers gradually sank to death. His memory began to fail; but it does not seem that he suffered any discomfort or pain during the next five years. When his sister Sarah died in January 1855, his only comment was, "What a great blessing! I wish I could die too." And in the same year, a week before Christmas Day, he made his passage. He had lived for ninety-two years and a little over, and for at least sixty-eight years had lived fully and well. Landor's great epigram surely suits this old man better than it suits its author:—

> "I fought with none, for none was worth my strife;
> Nature I loved, and, next to nature, Art;
> I warmed both hands before the fire of life;
> It sinks; and I am ready to depart."



SAMUEL ROGERS

FROM THE PAINTING BY THOMAS PHILLIPS, R.A., IN THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

CHAPTER V

THE MAN AND THE POET

ROGERS—as a much greater man, Swift—has rather suffered from the undue stress laid on his principal faculty by friends and admirers. There is no doubt that his chief natural gift, at any rate in the last fifty years of his life, was that for making sharp and apparently unkind speeches. There is equally little doubt that of all the men of his circle he was esteemed the most generous and the most willing with help. To him Wordsworth turned for the management of his publishers ; to him Byron appealed in his quarrel with his wife ; it was he who helped Moore, Sheridan, Lawrence, Henry Cary, and many others in their financial difficulties. It was plain that he enjoyed helping people as much as he delighted in quizzing them. And we must not forget that he was also the butt of a good deal of friendly wit. Sydney Smith was always joking him on his appearance—so corpse-like and worn ; and Smith was not alone in this. It was Lord Alvanley who said to him, " Rogers, as you can afford it, why don't you set up your hearse ? " and Dudley, who, as they were coming out of the Catacombs, waited at the entrance for Rogers, and shook hands with him, exclaiming, " Good-bye, Rogers." A man who could take jokes, perpetually directed against his personal appearance, so well as Rogers did, was not the cold-blooded, cynical sneerer of a certain tradition. That tradition probably arose among people who rarely, if ever, met Rogers, and only heard the pick of his most

cutting remarks. The best account we have of Rogers in his prime as a conversationalist is that of Fanny Kemble. It is true that she at times misunderstands Rogers' manner, ascribing to him a bitterness and malignancy which are evidently assumed; but her description is more vivid than most, and gives more distinctly the flavour of Rogers' conversation:—

"Rogers' keen-eyed wit seemed to cut his lips as he uttered it. Rogers' helpful benevolence and noble generosity to poor artists, poor authors, and all distressed whom he could serve or succour, was unbounded; he certainly had the kindest heart and the unkindest tongue of any one I ever knew. His benefits reminded me of a comical story my dear friend Harness once told me of a poor woman at whose lamentations over her various hardships one of his curates was remonstrating. 'Oh, come, come, now, my good woman, you must allow that Providence has been, on the whole, very good to you.' 'So He 'ave, sir—so He 'ave mostly. I don't deny it; but I sometimes think He 'ave taken it out in corns.' I think Rogers took out his benevolence, in some directions, in the corns he inflicted, or at any rate trod upon, in others.

"Mr. Rogers' inveterate tongue-gall was like an irresistible impulse, and he certainly bestowed it occasionally, without the least provocation, upon persons whom he professed to like. He was habitually kind to me, and declared he was fond of me. One evening (just after the publication of my stupid drama, 'The Star of Seville'), he met me with a malignant grin and the exclamation, 'Ah, I've just been reading your play. So nice, young poetry!' —with a diabolical *dig* of emphasis on the 'young.' 'Now, Mr. Rogers,' said I, 'what did I do to deserve that you should say that to me?' I do not know whether this

appeal disarmed him, but his only answer was to take me affectionately by the chin, much as if he had been my father. . . .

"A comical instance of the rivalry of wits (surely as keen as that of beauties) occurred one day when Mr. Rogers had been calling on me, and, speaking of that universal social favourite, Lady Morley, he said, 'There is but one voice against her in all England, and that is her own.' (A musical voice was the only charm wanting to Lady Morley's delightful conversation.) I was enchanted with this pretty epigram, so unlike in its tone to Mr. Rogers' usual *friendly* comments; and very soon after he left me, Sydney Smith coming in, I told him how clever and how pleasant a remark the 'departed' poet (Sydney Smith often spoke of Rogers as dead on account of his cadaverous complexion) had made on Lady Morley's voice. 'He never said it,' exclaimed my second illustrious visitor. 'But he did, Mr. Smith, to me, in this room, not half an hour ago.' 'He never *made* it; it isn't his; it isn't a bit like him.' To all of which I could only repeat that, nevertheless, he *had* said it, and that, whether he made it or not, it was extremely well made. Presently Sydney Smith went away. I was living in Upper Grosvenor Street, close to Park Lane; and he in Green Street, in the near neighbourhood. But I believe he must have run from my house to his own, so short was the interval of time before I received the following note, 'Dans toute l'Angleterre il n'y a qu'une voix contre moi, et c'est la mienne.' Then followed the signature of a French lady of the eighteenth century, and these words: 'What a dear, innocent, confiding, credulous creature you are! and how you *do* love Rogers!—SYDNEY SMITH.'"

The reader who picks up such a book as Dyce's *Table-*

talk must be prepared, I think, for a good many disappointments. A great deal of exaggeration is common about the merits of eighteenth-century wit, and generally about the wit of well-known men and well-advertised jesters. Very indifferent retorts and *bon mots*, epigrams that are excelled every day in ordinary modern conversation, have received a kind of traditional halo which serves to overshadow their lack of sharp outline. For instance we find frequently quoted as an example of Rogers' most cutting sarcasm the following story, told in the *Quarterly Review* for October 1888: "A small party were at table, Mr. Rogers and others present, including a gentleman well known for an inexcusable coarseness and freedom of speech, which eventually caused him to be shunned in society. It was in the middle of dinner when a tremendous knock at the front door was heard. 'What's that?' said the host, starting. The gentleman in question looked straight at Mr. Rogers. 'It's the devil come to carry off *you*.' Every one was silent, the host looked all consternation, one lady half rose from her seat; when the small, distinct voice was heard, and in the blandest tones—'Perhaps he may have the discrimination' (the word of five syllables being pronounced with special clearness, and with a slightly nasal pause on the fourth syllable) 'to prefer another member of the company.' In a moment of such embarrassment it was difficult to know what to do or say without adding to the embarrassment of the host, but the attack could not be left unnoticed; Mr. Rogers said the right thing and yet kept his place as a gentleman. The retort, unlike the attack, was not personal; but it satisfied the guests, it was understood by all, the lady subsided, the host raised a slight laugh, and the thing passed off."

The retort was well enough; but surely any one, pos-

sessed of a tongue and a certain measure of readiness, could have managed to make it. There is no justification for preserving the story as an astonishing example of effective reply; and to say it was "not personal" is to credit the anonymous boor and the rest of the dinner party with an astonishing incapacity for fitting the cap on the right head.

The truth is that London society—London literary society—was during most of Rogers' life a kind of close corporation, in which the most amiable habits of log-rolling existed. To say nothing of the astonishing habit of preparing your conversation for an evening party, as was the custom of Mackintosh, and Boddington (whose notes "Conversation" Sharp once stole), and others; the least little joke was so diligently fostered and advertised, especially if it came from a professed wit, such as Smith or Rogers, that nearly all the great men of that period suffer from the preservation of a deal of indifferent humour. Naturally and rightly friends are generously inclined to their companions' jests; but it is nothing short of a misfortune that the jests which friendship has approved should afterwards be acclaimed far above what their merits deserve.

The smallness of the circle in which Rogers was a prominent figure is shown in different ways. It seems almost incredible, for instance, that the name of so well known a collector should not occur in J. T. Smith's *A Book for a Rainy Day*, but I fail to find it. And, oddly enough, the name of Nollekens, Smith's patron and victim, does not occur in Mr. Clayden's memoir of Rogers, full and accurate though that is. There are other strange omissions in Rogers' list of acquaintances. We should have expected him to have shown more appreciation than is recorded of that great figure, Walter Savage Landor, a man whose Latin verse excelled that of "Conversation" Sharp; and

whose English prose and verse were unequalled by any of his contemporaries. Yet Landor and his work do not seem to have appealed to Rogers at all. Both in art and letters, Rogers' interest, except for the things of old, was largely bounded by his personal friendships; and even here his taste, though good and pure, was somewhat narrow. He was only at home with the forms of literature which he had admired in his youth: the virile force of *Childe Harold* seems to have terrified and disgusted him. He did not realise how great a genius was that of Charles Dickens, though the two men were on extremely friendly terms. Again while he evidently admired a good deal of Wordsworth's work, there is nothing to show that he had an eye for the mystery of Coleridge, or an ear for the new music which Shelley brought into English verse; while there is no mention of that greatest of Romantic poets, John Keats, in any account of Rogers' life. On the other hand he cherished respect for some perfectly forgotten worthies. There was one Crowe, Professor of Poetry at Oxford, whose blank verse, together with Milton's, according to Mr. Clayden, Rogers took as his model for *Italy*. Milton and Crowe! there was something lacking in the critical faculty of the man who could combine the two. The author of *Lewesdon Hill* has escaped even Mr. Arthur Symons' net in his *The Romantic Movement in English Poetry*, and it is not for me to disturb the dust on his sarcophagus; but I will quote the conclusion of *Lewesdon Hill*, much admired by Rogers:—

> "Now I descend
> To join the worldly crowd; perchance to talk,
> To think, to act as they; then all these thoughts
> That lift the expanded heart above this spot
> To heavenly musing; these shall pass away
> (Even as this goodly prospect from my view),

Hidden by near and earthly-rooted cares.
So passeth human life—our better mind
Is as a Sunday's garment, then put on,
When we have naught to do ; but at our work
We wear a worse for thrift. Of this enough,
To-morrow for severer thought, but now
To breakfast, and keep festival to-day."

Never was there a better illustration of the perils of contemporary criticism! This doleful, pedestrian stuff to be compared with Milton! This halting, wretched verse—note the weak ends of three of the last seven lines, " put on," " but now," " enough "—this conversational babble coupled with the gorgeous line of *Paradise Lost!*

The truth is that the criticism of the eighteenth century—and Rogers was, in his critical views, always of the eighteenth century—was marked by subservience to what may be called "good taste," elegance, improving sentiment. Literature was divorced from life in a way that was not paralleled before or since. Art, as I have said, was an accomplishment, not a passion—except with a few. This is why Dr. Johnson's critical faculty disapproved of Fielding, though his genius told him that the fellow was " immense " ; this is why of all Fielding's work *Amelia* was the only one to which he really gave his heart. This same devil of taste nearly wrecked Goldsmith's literary career, and did leave Blake to struggle in penury, and patronised Burns as a kind of inspired yokel, and damned Keats as an hysterical apothecary. Indeed very few were free from it : for Burns himself twisted his genius into uncomely " English " writing, while Byron was perpetually singing the unconscious threnody of a departed mode.

I believe that this same method of criticism, this insistence that art should be something subordinate to the chatter

of the club and the sentiment of the salon, was more disastrous in its effect than the later Victorian insistence on the ethical aspect of art. In the Ruskinian theory you have, at the worst, a demand that Art should serve a master which is as great, as real, as vivid, as important a part of life, to put the matter moderately, as she herself is : in the eighteenth-century demand that Art should be elegant, we have a damnable attempt to make the building inferior to its decorations, to make Art follow the leadership of what is, at best, only one of the handmaids of Art. When your first question on reading a poem, or looking at a picture, is not "Is this true," "Is this real," but is it obedient to this or that rule, is it an added embellishment to an artificial civilisation—you have got near the bankruptcy of criticism. It is this false standard which enables Rogers to mention Milton and Crowe in the same breath ; sometimes one is seized with a fear that a good many critics of the period did not so much as admire Crowe through bad taste, as admire Milton through bad taste. They could, I imagine, praise Milton in the wrong way, admire him for those superficial qualities which might be superficially imitable, though never really imitable as were the tricks of Pope and his school. But of this error I do not think there is any need to accuse Rogers. Of the gulf that separates modern criticism from that of the early days of the last century it would be difficult to find a better instance than the letter of Thomas Grenville, in reply to a copy of *Childe Harold* sent him by Rogers :—

"Many thanks, my dear Rogers, though I must own myself unworthy of *Childe Harold*. It is written in a deadly spirit of scorn and hate which curdles the blood, and chills every kindly feeling, instead of cheering and promoting

them. Two striking stanzas on solitude, marked by your discriminating pencil, and some vigorous poetry on Wellington's battle, though with a cautious avoidance of his name or fame, and a wild and rich imagination nourishing a powerful and vigorous pen, do not compensate in my mind for the impression of disgust which I derive from the odious spirit of his writings.—Yours ever,

"T. GRENVILLE"

Mr. Clayden remarks rather naïvely that "Tom Grenville . . . was one of the best read men of his time, and his judgement was not likely to be warped by prejudices." Of course wide reading, except in the case of a few very independent spirits, is one of the worst qualifications for judging a new temper in poetry. The folk who are most foolish in criticism are generally precisely those who approach new work from a basis of old prejudices, acquired by much reading. What is so startling in the letter, is the complete absence of reference to the serious faults of the poem, the extreme youth of its pessimism and the careless rhetoric of its language; and the ignoring of its supreme merits, the talent for observation, for subjective description, the superb capacity for self-revelation, of, at least, a momentary sincerity. No wonder Byron, so wrongly condemned and so wrongly praised, had his head turned in those early days!

It cannot, then, surprise us that Rogers' own poetry, while it is careful, regular, smooth, finished, full of the most unexceptionable sentiment, is almost entirely devoid of life and of personal truth. And it is in this last that we mark the distinction between accomplished verse and real poetry. Just as religion is not the repetition of creed or formula, not the acceptance of orthodoxy, not the following of a

theological fashion, but an emotional truth personally discerned and followed: so true poetry is not the composition of pleasant verses, fortified by a correct taste and a due disposition of epithets and sentiments. It is emotional reality, personally discerned and personally expressed. Now until we come to *Italy* we scarcely ever get in Rogers' verse the conjunction between truth and personal feeling. We have, frequently, irreproachable truisms gracefully phrased; we have, less frequently, personal reminiscence pleasantly told—but the truisms have not been appropriated by the poet, and the personal stories have too little connection with the real side of life to be important, or else fail of adequate emotional expression.

I would set no one now to read *The Pleasures of Memory*, still less *Jacqueline* or *Columbus*, unless the reader was bent on studying the whole world of English poetry. They have nothing to yield save to the student of style, at its most polished and least forcible—they seem weaker to-day than such work as Haynes Bayly's.

Here is one of the best passages from the second part of *The Pleasures of Memory*:—

> "The beauteous maid, who bids the world adieu,
> Oft of that world will snatch a fond review;
> Oft at the shrine neglect her beads, to trace
> Some social scene, some dear, familiar face:
> And ere, with iron tongue, the vesper-bell
> Bursts thro' the cypress-walk, the convent-cell,
> Oft will her warm and wayward heart revive,
> To love and joy still tremblingly alive;
> The whispered vow, the chaste caress prolong,
> Weave the light dance and swell the choral song:
> With rapt ear drink the enchanting serenade,
> And, as it melts along the moonlight-glade,

To each soft note return as soft a sigh,
And bless the youth that bids her slumbers fly."

Or again :—

"Ah! why should Virtue fear the frowns of Fate!
Hers what no wealth can buy, no power create!
A little world of clear and cloudless day,
Nor wrecked by storms, nor mouldered by decay;
A world, with MEMORY'S ceaseless sunshine blest,
The home of Happiness, an honest breast.
But most we mark the wonders of her reign,
When Sleep has locked the senses in her chain.
When sober Judgment has his throne resigned,
She smiles away the chaos of the mind;
And, as warm Fancy's bright Elysium glows,
From Her each image springs, each colour flows.
She is the sacred guest! the immortal friend!
Oft seen o'er sleeping Innocence to bend,
In that dead hour of night to Silence given,
Whispering seraphic visions of her heaven.
When the blithe son of Savoy, journeying round,
With humble wares and pipe of merry sound,
From his green vale and sheltered cabin hies,
And scales the Alps to visit foreign skies;
Tho' far below the forked lightnings play,
And at his feet the thunder dies away,
Oft, in the saddle rudely rocked to sleep,
While his mule browses on the dizzy steep,
With MEMORY'S aid, he sits at home, and sees
His children sport beneath their native trees,
And bends to hear their cherub-voices call
O'er the loud fury of the torrent's fall."

How impossibly far away this style of verse seems : the great Romantic revival, the still more effectual modernist

revolt has made this quiet, placid verse-making a thing that scarcely arouses even an antiquarian interest.

I think it was Scott who once showed how any decasyllable verse could be reduced to his favourite octosyllables by omitting otiose epithets. Without any doubt this is the greatest condemnation any style of verse can have—that it is not itself, only a sort of Procrustean imitation of a less dignified mode: see how easily this of Rogers can be altered:—

> "The maid, who bids the world adieu,
> Often will snatch a fond review;
> Often neglect her beads, to trace
> Some social scene, some well-loved face:
> And ere, with iron tongue, the bell
> Bursts through the silent convent-cell,
> Oft will her wayward heart revive,
> To love and joy, ah! still alive;
> The vow, the chaste caress prolong,
> Weave the light dance and swell the song:
> Drink the enchanting serenade,
> And, as it melts along the glade,
> To each soft note returns a sigh,
> And bless the youth that bids her fly."

The last line is, perhaps, rather too ribald; as it offers the maiden something more substantial than memory's aid; and in certain places I admit the verse is spoiled, not improved by reducing to the octosyllabic form, noticeably in the omission of "moonlight." But the alterations were made *currente calamo*, and just imagine what a disastrous effort it would be similarly to alter any good modern poet, says Mr. Yeats' nervous decasyllables, or Mr. Robert Bridges', or Mr. Symons'; while, with a little ingenuity,

I believe pages of eighteenth-century verse could be so altered, without any serious change in the meaning of the poems. The whole of Rogers' earlier poetry is ridden by the spirit of the gradus, by the curse of poetical language from which Wordsworth had not yet freed English verse. In the second quotation—well representative of the whole poem—in those twenty-eight lines we have "clear and cloudless" sky, "sober" judgment, "warm" fancy, "bright" Elysium, "sleeping" innocence, "seraphic" visions, "blithe" peasant, "humble" wares, "green" vale, "forked" lightnings, "dizzy" steeps—a perfect galaxy of *cliché* epithets. Such a passage revives the memory of school-days when with the aid of Carey's *Gradus ad Parnassum* one built laborious mockeries of Horace, Virgil, or Ovid.

Human Life is of greater interest: it has a more Cowper-like quality, but it hardly reaches the quiet dignity of the other poet. Still in its quaint formal way, such a passage as this is not unworthy of the author of *The Task*:—

> "Soon through the gadding vine the sun looks in,
> And gentle hands the breakfast-rite begin.
> Then the bright kettle sings its matin-song,
> Then fragrant clouds of Mocha and Souchong
> Blend as they rise; and (while without are seen,
> Sure of their meal, the small birds on the green;
> And in from far a school-boy's letter flies,
> Flushing the sister's cheek with glad surprise)
> That sheet unfold (who reads, and reads it not?)
> Born with the day and with the day forgot;
> Its ample page various as human life,
> The pomp, the woe, the bustle, and the strife!"

And these lines about the great English lover of liberty are of strong personal charm:—

"And now once more where most he loved to be,
In his own fields—breathing tranquillity—
We hail him—not less happy, Fox, than thee!
Thee at St. Anne's so soon of care beguiled,
Playful, sincere, and artless as a child!
Thee, who wouldst watch a bird's nest on the spray,
Through the green leaves exploring, day by day.
How oft from grove to grove, from seat to seat
With thee conversing in thy loved retreat,
I saw the sun go down!—Ah, then 'twas thine
Ne'er to forget some volume half divine,
Shakspeare's or Dryden's—thro' the chequered shade
Borne in thy hand behind thee as we strayed;
And where we sate (and many a halt we made)
To read there with a fervour all thy own,
And in thy grand and melancholy tone,
Some splendid passage not to thee unknown,
Fit theme for long discourse—Thy bell has tolled!"

Again in the lines on Fox's death Rogers approaches at times a felicity of phrase, which though not strictly poetical, is far removed from the epithet-slavery of his less felt, more polished work. The poem is so short that it may be quoted in full:—

WRITTEN IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY[1]

(10 *October* 1806)

Whoe'er thou art, approach, and with a sigh,
Mark where the small remains of Greatness lie.[2]
There sleeps the dust of FOX for ever gone;
How near the place where late his glory shone!

---

[1] After the Funeral of the Right Hon. Charles James Fox.

[2] Venez voir le peu qui nous reste de tant de grandeur, &c. (Bossuet, *Oraison funèbre de Louis de Bourbon*).

And, tho' no more ascends the voice of Prayer,
Tho' the last footsteps cease to linger there,
Still, like an awful Dream that comes again,
Alas, at best, as transient and as vain,
Still do I see (while thro' the vaults of night
The funeral-song once more proclaims the rite)
The moving Pomp along the shadowy Isle,
That, like a Darkness, filled the solemn Pile;
The illustrious line, that in long order led,
Of those, that loved Him living, mourned Him dead;
Of those the Few, that for their Country stood
Round Him who dared be singularly good;
All, of all ranks, that claimed Him for their own;
And nothing wanting—but Himself alone![1]

Oh say, of Him now rests there but a name;
Wont, as He was, to breathe ethereal flame?
Friend of the Absent, Guardian of the Dead!
Who but would here their sacred sorrows shed?
(Such as He shed on NELSON'S closing grave;
How soon to claim the sympathy He gave!)
In Him, resentful of another's wrong,
The dumb were eloquent, the feeble strong.
Truth from his lips a charm celestial drew—
Ah, who so mighty and so gentle too?

What tho' with War the madding Nations rung,
"Peace," when He spoke, was ever on his tongue!
Amid the frowns of Power, the tricks of State,
Fearless, resolved, and negligently great!
In vain malignant vapours gathered round;
He walked, erect, on consecrated ground.
The clouds, that rise to quench the Orb of day,
Reflect its splendour and dissolve away!

When in retreat He laid his thunder by,
For lettered ease and calm Philosophy,

[1] Et rien enfin ne manque dans tous ces honneurs, que celui à qui on les rend (Ibid.).

Blest were his hours within the silent grove,
Where still his god-like Spirit deigns to rove;
Blest by the orphan's smile, the widow's prayer,
For many a deed, long done in secret there.
There shone his lamp on Homer's sacred page,
There, listening, sate the hero and the sage;
And they, by virtue and by blood allied,
Whom most He loved, and in whose arms He died.
Friend of all Human-kind! not here alone
(The voice, that speaks, was not to Thee unknown)
Wilt Thou be missed. O'er every land and sea
Long, long shall England be revered in Thee!
And, when the Storm is hushed—in distant years—
Foes on Thy grave shall meet, and mingle tears!

Apart from the sincerity of feeling that is displayed even through the style, there are here and there several happy and really descriptive touches: "loved him living, mourned him dead," "negligently great"—catch the right atmosphere.

Until Rogers found his real work in the writing of *Italy*, all his best verse was that produced under the influence of Goldsmith, Pope, and Cowper. He had a certain faculty for expressing harmonious ideas in harmonious verse; and when those ideas are enlightened by some reference to personal experience, we get his best verse of that manner. For this reason I have put *Human Life* here out of its place—for it was not published till 1819. It represents the highest point reached by him in his reflective style, and before he had adopted the more colloquial, easier kind of writing that he used in *Italy*. Before, however, he came to Italy, he was led astray, under the powerful persuasiveness of the demand of the time, and the example of the newer men, into trespassing on the domains of Byron and Scott.

In his *Columbus*, over whose composition he was so unconscionable a time, Rogers made a new and most unsuccessful departure. He had no kind of talent for telling a long and connected story; he was far too occupied with sources, with authorities; and he never succeeded in getting the breath of life into the tale of the discovery of America. The poem—which, when published, after fourteen years' labour, was not completed—professes to be translated from a manuscript, written by a companion of Columbus. This device never convinces,[1] and what little verisimilitude it might have possessed is ruined by Rogers' post-Columban notes referring to books and people. The poem is written in Cantos, giving a fragmentary account of the journey to and arrival in America; and it is almost as slow reading as it was slow writing. There is a certain amount of supernatural machinery, of which the following is a favourable specimen :—

Canto III

AN ASSEMBLY OF EVIL SPIRITS

Tho' changed my cloth of gold for amice grey [1]—
In my spring-time, when every month was May,
With hawk and hound I coursed away the hour,
Or sung my roundelay in lady's bower.
And tho' my world be now a narrow cell,
(Renounced for ever all I loved so well)
Tho' now my head be bald, my feet be bare,
And scarce my knees sustain my book of prayer,
Oh I was there, one of that gallant crew,
And saw—and wondered whence his Power He drew,

[1] Many of the first discoverers ended their days in a hermitage or a cloister.

Yet little thought, who by his side I stood,
Of his great Foes in earth and air and flood,
Then uninstructed—But my sand is run,
And the Night coming—and my Task not done!—

'Twas in the deep, immeasurable cave
Of ANDES,[1] echoing to the Southern wave,
Mid pillars of Basalt, the work of fire,
That, giant-like, to upper day aspire,
'Twas there that now, as wont in heaven to shine,
Forms of angelic mould and grace divine,
Assembled. All, exiled the realms of rest,
In vain the sadness of their souls suppressed;
Yet of their glory many a scattered ray
Shot thro' the gathering shadows of decay.
Each moved a God; and all, as Gods, possessed
One half the globe; from pole to pole confessed![2]

. . . . . .

Oh could I now—but how in mortal verse—
Their numbers, their heroic deeds rehearse!
These in dim shrines and barbarous symbols reign,
Where PLATA and MATAGNON meet the Main.[3]
Those the wild hunter worships as he roves,
In the green shade of CHILI'S fragrant groves;
Or warrior-tribes with rites of blood implore,
Whose night-fires gleam along the sullen shore

---

[1] Vast indeed must be those dismal regions, if it be true, as conjectured (Kircher, Subt. I. 202) that Etna, in her eruptions, has discharged twenty times her original bulk. Well might she be called by Euripides (Troades, v. 222) the *Mother of Mountains;* yet Etna herself is but "a mere fire-work, when compared to the burning summits of the Andes."

[2] Gods, yet confessed later (Milton). Ils ne laissent pas d'en être les esclaves, et de les honorer plus que le grand Esprit, qui de sa nature est non (Lafitau).

[3] Rivers of South America. Their collision with the tide has the effect of a tempest.

Of HURON or ONTARIO, inland seas,[1]
What time the song of death is in the breeze!
. . . . . .
'Twas now in dismal pomp and order due,
While the vast conclave flashed with lightnings blue,
On shining pavements of metallic ore,
That many an age the fusing sulphur bore,
They held high council. All was silence round,
When, with a voice most sweet yet most profound,
A sovereign Spirit burst the gates of night,
And from his wings of gold shook drops of liquid light!
MERION, commissioned with his host to sweep
From age to age the melancholy deep!

The whole thing is so terribly unspontaneous, the verse moves along with so halting a precision, the thought is so confused and turmoiled, the truth of the vision is so obscured by the vast amount of information, that it is difficult to retain any vivid impression at all of the significance of the events. The narrative scenes are a little better; here is the 8th Canto, describing the first sight of land:—

"Twice in the zenith blazed the orb of light;
No shade, all sun, insufferably bright!
Then the long line found rest—in coral groves
Silent and dark, where the sea-lion roves:—
And all on deck, kindling to life again,
Sent forth their anxious spirits o'er the main.
Oh whence, as wafted from Elysium, whence
These perfumes, strangers to the raptured sense?
These boughs of gold, and fruits of heavenly hue,
Tinging with vermeil light the billows blue?

[1] Lakes of North America. Huron is above a thousand miles in circumference. Ontario receives the waters of the Niagara, so famous for its falls; and discharges itself into the Atlantic by the river St. Lawrence.

And (thrice, thrice blessed is the eye that spied,
The hand that snatched it sparkling in the tide)
Whose cunning carved this vegetable bowl,[1]
Symbol of social rites, and intercourse of soul?
Such to their grateful ear the gush of springs,
Who course the ostrich, as away she wings;
Sons of the desert! who delight to dwell
'Mid kneeling camels round the sacred well;
Who, ere the terrors of his pomp be passed,
Fall to the demon in the redd'ning blast.[2]
The sails were furled: with many a melting close,
Solemn and slow the evening anthem rose,
Rose to the Virgin.[3] 'Twas the hour of day,
When setting suns o'er summer seas display
A path of glory, opening in the west
To golden climes, and islands of the blest;
And human voices, on the silent air,
Went o'er the waves in songs of gladness there!
Chosen of men![4] 'Twas thine, at noon of night,
First from the prow to hail the glimmering light;[5]

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[1] Ex ligno lucido confectum, et arte mira laboratum (P. Martyr, dec. i. 5).

[2] The Simoon.

[3] Salve, regina (Herrera, I. i. 2). It was the usual service, and always sung with great solemnity. "I remember one evening," says Oviedo, "when the ship was in full sail, and all the men were on their knees, singing Salve, regina," &c. (Relacion Sommaria). The hymn, O Sanctissima, is still to be heard after sunset along the shores of Sicily, and its effect may be better conceived than described.

[4] I believe that he was *chosen* for this great service; and that, because he was to be so truly an apostle, as in effect he proved to be, therefore was his origin obscure; that therein he might resemble those who were called to make known the name of the Lord from seas and rivers, and not from courts and palaces. And I believe also, that, as in most of his doings he was guarded by some special providence, his very name was not without some mystery; for in it is expressed the wonder he performed; inasmuch as he conveyed to a new world the grace of the Holy Ghost, &c. (Hist. c. 1).

[5] A light in the midst of darkness, signifying the spiritual light that he came to spread there (F. Col. c. 22 Herrera, I. i. 12).

(Emblem of Truth divine, whose secret ray
Enters the soul, and makes the darkness day)!
PEDRO! RODRIGO![1] there, methought, it shone!
There—in the west!—and now, alas! 'tis gone!—
'Twas all a dream! we gaze and gaze in vain!
—But mark and speak not, there it comes again!
It moves! what form unseen, what being there
With torch-like lustre from the murky air?
His instincts, passions, say, how like our own?
Oh! when will day reveal a world unknown?"

Smooth and unemotional, the poem pursues its way, and we cannot wonder that a public which was by now used to the gallant rhythmical swing of Scott and the rhetorical sweep of Byron should fail to have been moved by this plodding *Columbus*.

The disappointment felt by Rogers must have been acute; but we must remember it was only the pressure of ill-advised friends caused him to publish it when he did. He had taken infinite pains over the work—we may notice that in a letter to Sharp about some passage in it, he adopts Smith's joke about his method of production: "My dear Friend, As I am *a l'agonie* you must not complain of my cries"—and he consulted friends over every nuance of expression, even over the punctuation. Probably he was trying to remove his own suspicions that the subject and style of the poem were really outside his range.

Under the prevailing influence of Byron, Rogers made one more excursion into a realm of poetry where he could never hope to achieve success. If *Columbus* is slow and difficult, it is positively lively beside *Jacqueline;* but we doubt if any one who bought the book read anything but

[1] Pedro Gutierrez, a Page of the King's Chamber. Rodrigo Sanchez of Segoria, Comptroller of the Fleet.

Lara, which was issued in the same volume. The praise of his friends over his dull little tale in verse is impossible to understand. Jacqueline is a girl who marries against her father's wishes, and here is the climax of the tale—Jacqueline is bringing her husband to plead with her father:—

"Then Jacqueline the silence broke.
She clasped her father's knees and spoke,
Her brother kneeling too;
While D'Arcy as before looked on,
Tho' from his manly cheek was gone
Its natural hue.
'His praises from your lips I heard,
Till my fond heart was won;
And, if aught his Sire has erred,
Oh, turn not from the Son!—
She, whom in joy, in grief you nursed;
Who climbed and called you father first,
By that dear name conjures—
On her you thought—but to be kind!
When looked she up, but you inclined?
These things, for ever in her mind,
Oh are they gone from yours?
Two kneeling at your feet behold;
One—one how young;—nor yet the other old.
Oh spurn them not—nor look so cold—
If Jacqueline be cast away,
Her bridal be her dying day.
—Well, well might she believe in you!
She listened, and she found it true.'
He shook his aged locks of snow;
And twice he turned, and rose to go.
She hung; and was St. Pierre to blame,
If tears and smiles together came?
'Oh no—begone! I'll hear no more.'

But, as he spoke, his voice relented.
'That very look thy mother wore
When she implored, and old Le Roc consented.
True, I have erred and will atone;
For still I love him as my own.
And now, in my hands, yours with his unite;
A father's blessing on your heads alight!
. . . Nor let the least be sent away.
All hearts shall sing Adieu to sorrow.'
St. Pierre has found his child to-day;
And old and young shall dance to-morrow."

It is a relief to turn from this kind of writing to Rogers' last and best work, to *Italy*. Over this, as over the *Columbus*, he took years; but they were years far better spent. And the time of composition was justified in the case of a work of observation. It would be foolish to call *Italy* a great, or even a good, poem: but it is eminently readable, except very occasionally: it has a living interest both for writer and reader; and it contains many descriptive passages which still remain among the best objective pictures of Italian life and scenery. Certain parts of it, like the story of Ginevra, are well known; and though it is probable that only lovers of Italy ever read it through, it is equally true that, unlike most guide-books or descriptive writing, it is rendered not less but more interesting to those familiar with the places described.

The poem follows the route into Italy over the Great St. Bernard, of whose Hospice Rogers writes gratefully:—

"Oft has a venerable roof received me;
ST. BRUNO'S once[1]—where, when the winds were hushed,
Nor from the cataract the voice came up,

[1] The Grande Chartreuse.

You might have heard the mole work underground,
So great the stillness of that place; none seen,
Save when from rock to rock a hermit crossed
By some rude bridge—or one at midnight tolled
To matins, and white habits, issuing forth,
Glided along those aisles interminable,
All, all observant of the sacred law
Of Silence. Nor is that sequestered spot
Once called 'Sweet Waters,' nor 'The Shady Vale,' [1]
To me unknown; that house so rich of old,
So courteous, and, by two that passed that way,[2]
Amply requited with immortal verse,
The Poet's payment.—But, among them all,
None can with this compare, the dangerous seat
Of generous, active Virtue. What though Frost
Reign everlastingly, and ice and snow
Thaw not, but gather—there is that within,
Which, where it comes, makes Summer; and, in thought,
Oft am I sitting on the bench beneath
Their garden plot, where all that vegetates
Is but some scanty lettuce, to observe
Those from the South ascending, every step
As though it were their last,—and instantly
Restored, renewed, advancing as with songs,
Soon as they see, turning a lofty crag,
That plain, that modest structure, promising
Bread to the hungry, to the weary rest."

Thence the poem goes to Como and Bergamo. The lines opening "Venice," to which the poet came from Padua, are almost worthy of the tranquil beauty of the city:—

"There is a glorious City in the Sea.
The Sea is in the broad, the narrow streets,

[1] Vallombrosa, formerly called Acqua Bella.
[2] Ariosto, and Milton. Milton was there at the fall of the leaf.

Ebbing and flowing; and the salt sea-weed
Clings to the marble of her palaces.
No track of men, no footsteps to and fro,
Lead to her gates. The path lies o'er the Sea,
Invisible; and from the land we went,
As to a floating City—steering in,
And gliding up her streets as in a dream,
So smoothly, silently—by many a dome,
Mosque-like, and many a stately portico,
The statues ranged along an azure sky;
By many a pile in more than Eastern pride,
Of old the residence of merchant kings;
The fronts of some, though Time had shattered them,
Still glowing with the richest hues of art,
As though the wealth within them had run o'er."

These lines charmed the imagination of young Ruskin, although in a characteristic letter he once complained that there was another side to the beauty of Venice. He wrote from Venice in the June of 1850:—

"The worst of it was that I lost all *feeling* of Venice, and this was the reason both of my not writing to you and of my thinking of you so often. For whenever I found myself getting utterly hard and indifferent, I used to read over a little bit of the 'Venice' in the *Italy*, and it put me always into the right tone of thought again, and for this I cannot be enough grateful to you. For though I believe that in the summer, when Venice is indeed lovely, when pomegranate blossoms hang over every garden wall, and green sunlight shoots through every wave, custom will not destroy or even weaken the impression conveyed at first, it is far otherwise in the length and bitterness of the Venetian winters. Fighting with frosty winds at every turn of the canals takes away all the old feelings of peace and stillness;

the protracted cold makes the dash of the water on the walls a sound of simple discomfort, and some wild and dark day in February one starts to find oneself actually balancing in one's mind the relative advantages of land and water carriage, comparing the canal with Piccadilly, and even hesitating whether for the rest of one's life one would rather have a gondola within call or a hansom. When I used to get into this humour I *always* had recourse to those lines of yours—

> 'The Sea is in the broad, the narrow streets,
> Ebbing and flowing,' &c.;

and they did me good service for many a day; but at last came a time when the sea was *not* in the narrow streets, and was always ebbing and not flowing; and one day, when I found just a foot and a half of muddy water left under the Bridge of Sighs, and ran aground in the Grand Canal as I was going home, I was obliged to give the canals up. I have never recovered the feeling of them."

For students of Venice the "Stones" of Ruskin has long since replaced Rogers' poem; but I think, that even after the wonderful prose, this easy, rather conversational verse, with its occasional loftier passages, is not entirely worthy of neglect. Rogers intersperses his descriptive work with short narrative poems, and under Venice we have the story of *Foscari*, but it is not for these interludes that any one would claim to-day remembrance for *Italy*. It is for the touches of description, the affectionate hovering over distant remembered scenes, the calm meditation evoked by familiar places, where the natural charm of Rogers' nature peeps through his verse. How good, for instance, in its studied Latin, Horatian style—apart from "unpremeditated verse"—is this passage describing the effect of classical

Rome on the nature of a cultured and educated man of that time :—

"Ah! little thought I, when in school I sate,
A school-boy on his bench, at early dawn
Glowing with Roman story, I should live
To treat the *Appian*, once an avenue
Of monuments most glorious, palaces,
Their doors sealed up and silent as the night,
The dwelling of the illustrious dead—to turn
Towards Tibur, and, beyond the City-gate,
Pour out my unpremeditated verse
Where on his mule I might have met so oft
Horace himself[1]—or climb the Palatine
Dreaming of old Evander and his guest,
Dreaming and lost on that proud eminence,
Long while the seat of Rome, hereafter found
Less than enough (so monstrous was the brood
Engendered there, so Titan-like) to lodge
One in his madness;[2] and inscribe my name,
My name and date, on some broad aloe-leaf,
That shoots and spreads within those very walls[3]
Where Virgil read aloud his tale divine,
Where his voice faltered and a mother wept
Tears of delight!"

Another most successful feature of *Italy* are the prose notes, which are in Rogers' happiest vein. They entirely avoid the prolixity which is too often observable in his

[1] And Augustus in his litter, coming at a still slower rate. He was borne along by slaves; and the gentle motion allowed him to read, write, and employ himself as in his cabinet. Though Tivoli is only sixteen miles from the city, he was always two nights on the road (Suetonius).

[2] Nero.

[3] At the words "Tu Marcellus eris." The story is so beautiful that every reader must wish it to be true.

verse; and his prose better repays the polishing and finishing process to which he subjected all his work. They are invariably incisive and to the point, and show something of the brilliance of his conversation. How good this is for instance: "When a Despot lays his hand on a Free City, how soon must he make the discovery of the Rustic, who bought Punch of the Puppet-show man, and complained that he would not speak!" And there are scattered throughout the notes such excellent descriptive bits as these: "It is somewhere mentioned that Michael Angelo, when he set out from Florence to build the dome of St. Peter's, turned his horse round in the road to contemplate once more that of the cathedral, as it rose in the grey of the morning from among the pines, and that he said after a pause: 'Come te non voglio! Meglio di te non posso!' He never indeed spoke of it but with admiration; and, if we may believe tradition, his tomb by his own desire was to be so placed in the Santa Croce as that from it might be seen, when the doors of the church stood open, that noble work of Brunelleschi."

And this other on Leonardo's Cenacolo, a note which blends so admirably reflection and description:—

"'You admire that picture,' said an old Dominican to me at Padua, as I stood contemplating a Last Supper in the Refectory of his Convent, the figures as large as the life. 'I have sat at my meals before it for seven and forty years; and such are the changes that have taken place among us—so many have come and gone in the time—that, when I look upon the company there—upon those who are sitting at that table, silent as they are—I am sometimes inclined to think that we, and not they, are the shadows.'

"The celebrated fresco of Lionardo da Vinci in the monastery of Santa Maria delle Grazie at Milan must again

and again have suggested the same reflection. Opposite to it stood the Prior's table, the monks sitting down the chamber on right and left; and the artist, throughout his picture, has evidently endeavoured to make it correspond with what he saw when they were assembled there. The table-cloth, with the corners tied up, and with its regular folds as from the press, must have been faithfully copied; and the dishes and drinking cups are, no doubt, such as were used by the fathers in that day. See Goethe, vol. xxxix. p. 94."

I do not know that I can take leave of *Italy* better than in the words affixed to the poem in 1839. From their rather pathetic appeal, their prosaic, yet not undignified rhythm, we can surely gather a truer idea of Rogers in old age than in the ill-natured stories of his moments of pique and snappy irritability.

"And now a parting word is due from him
Who, in the classic fields of Italy,
(If haply thou hast borne with him so long,)
Through many a grove by many a fount has led thee,
By many a temple half as old as Time;
Where all was still awakening them that slept,
And conjuring up where all was desolate,
Where kings were mouldering in their funeral urns,
And oft and long the vulture flapped his wings—
Triumphs and masques.
Nature denied him much,
But gave him at his birth what most he values;
A passionate love for music, sculpture, painting,
For poetry, the language of the gods,
For all things here, or grand or beautiful,
A setting sun, a lake among the mountains,
The light of an ingenuous countenance,
And what transcends them all, a noble action.

Nature denied him much, but gave him more;
And ever, ever grateful should he be,
Though from his cheek, ere yet the down was there,
Health fled; for in his heaviest hours would come
Gleams such as come not now; nor failed he then,
(Then and through life his happiest privilege)
Full oft to wander where the Muses haunt,
Smit with the love of song.
'Tis now long since;
And now, while yet 'tis day, would he withdraw,
Who, when in youth he strung his lyre, addressed
A former generation. Many an eye,
Bright as the brightest now, is closed in night,
And many a voice, how eloquent, is mute,
That, when he came, disdained not to receive
His lays with favour."

CHAPTER VI

PAINTERS AND POLITICIANS

APART from the recollections of his childhood Rogers seems to have had little share in the religious life of his age. He remained all his life "an orthodox Unitarian," if the expression may be allowed: although he would never, I imagine, have become so narrow as those modern Unitarians who tried to prevent an orthodox Christian from teaching in a "Free" college, in the fear that their young men should be tainted with the virus of something other than their own heresy. Rogers' interest was not for theology, but for religion of a practical kind. He was a child of that "sensible Christianity" of the eighteenth century, which, though it had grave faults, did, at its best, produce a real spirit of charity and kindliness. No doubt that spirit was displayed in somewhat restricted ways: there is no sign among Rogers' immediate circle—with the possible exception of Smith—of any vivid interest in social questions. He was a Whig and a philosophical Whig: which meant that he voted for all measures of apparent freedom. He was a Whig and a religious Whig: which meant he believed in religious liberty even for Papists. Towards the close of his life, Lord Glenelg, an enthusiastic Evangelical, attempted to convert Rogers; and his letters to the old man of nearly ninety are curious reading in their sincere but somewhat too theological piety. There is no evidence that Rogers was affected by these efforts to change the faith which he had learnt from Dr. Price. What that was is told in the well-known death-

bed remark of "Bobus" Smith: "'Rogers, however we may doubt on some points, we have made up our minds on one—that Christ was sent into the world commissioned by the Almighty, to instruct mankind.' 'Yes,' said Rogers, 'of that I am perfectly convinced.'"

Mr. Clayden tells a beautiful story which illustrates the unaffected reality of Rogers' religion. "One of the acts of his old age, still vividly remembered by the remaining members of the groups of children who were round the table, was to say to them just before the party broke up: 'We have eaten together, we have played together, but we have never prayed together; let us do so now.' And he made them kneel while he repeated the Lord's Prayer."

There is one incident, however, in Rogers' early life, which knits his name to that of the greatest religious genius of the eighteenth century. The story was told by the Rev. John Mitford in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (vol. 45, p. 147):—

"The last drive I ever took with Mr. Rogers in his chariot was one often previously made by us into the City, to pay one of his regular calls on his oldest friend, Mr. William Maltby, of the London Institution, who had been his school-fellow more than eighty years previous to this time, and who died a year or two before him, nearly at the same age. In returning by the City Road, he pulled the check-string opposite to the Bunhill Fields Burial-ground, and then desired me to get out and read the inscription on the stone which stands conspicuously over the grave of the well-known Thomas Hardy. This being done, he said: 'You see that little chapel opposite—go and look carefully at the house which stands there to the left of it, and then come back and get in.' This all duly performed, and again seated side by side, he said: 'When I was a young man in the banking-

house, and my father lived at Newington, I used every day in going to the City to pass by this place. One day in returning I saw a number of respectable persons of both sexes assembled here, all well dressed in mourning, and with very serious look and behaviour. The door of the house was open, and they entered it in pairs. I thought that, without impropriety, I might join them, so we all walked upstairs, and came to a drawing-room in the midst of which was a table ; on this table lay the body of a person dressed in a clergyman's robes, with bands, and his grey hair shading his face on either side. He was of small stature and his countenance looked like wax. We all moved round the table, some of the party much affected, with our eyes fixed on the venerable figure that lay before us ; and as we moved on, others came up and succeeded in like manner. After we had gone the round of the table in our lingering procession we descended as we came. The person that lay before us was the celebrated John Wesley, and at the earnest request of his congregation, they were permitted to take this pathetic and affectionate farewell of their beloved pastor.' "

Rogers' interest in art was the fruit of training and education rather than a natural taste encouraged in later life. There is no evidence that his views on Italian art or on the modern English masters were other than those common at the time ; he had the passion of that time for Guido and Domenichino, and speaks in enthusiastic terms of Carlo Dolci. It is not, I think, sufficiently recognized by modern writers that this eighteenth-century view of art was but the complement of the eighteenth-century view of letters, religion and life. The lesser and later Italian masters did excel in skilful drawing and in facile, easily intelligible composition ; and it was just those qualities for which the

eighteenth century admired them. It is foolish to suppose that what was admired were those faults which we find—the lack of feeling, the insincerity, the absence of depth. Those things were not wanted by the age of Louis Quatorze ; and were not admired when they were met with, except in the very greatest masters—a Shakespeare or a Michael Angelo. And we must always remember that in England Hogarth was really appreciated, as well as such people as the ineffable Keyse and the intolerable Kneller. The smaller Dutch masters were also valued, perhaps above their true worth ; and there was a genuine passion among some collectors for the etchings of Rembrandt.

In his long life Rogers saw many changes in the art-world. He was alive when the Royal Academy was founded —and of all that first list of names, who, save the student, remembers more than a half-dozen — Reynolds, Gainsborough, Bartolozzi, Wilson, Zoffany, and Angelica Kaufmann, because she was a woman and had a romance ? Rogers lived to see the publication of *Modern Painters*, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, and *The Stones of Venice ;* and before he died Millais' " Lorenzo and Isabella " was hung in the Academy's rooms in Trafalgar Square. Much of the modern movement must have been of little significance to Rogers ; there was something lacking in the artistic faculty of a man who could say : " The Colosseum in the Regent's Park is a noble building—finer than anything among the remains of ancient architecture out of Italy. It is ridiculous to hear Englishmen who have been at Rome talking with such rapture of the ancient buildings they have seen there ; in fact the old Romans were but indifferent architects." This from a man who had seen the Colosseum (not in the Regent's Park) and the Pantheon. On the other hand, in painting Rogers shows signs of a more advanced

taste ; he not only employed Turner for engravings, but he praised his pictures and acclaimed in them "a grandeur which neither Claude nor Poussin could give to theirs." He did not share the common opinion which put Chantrey above Flaxman, and though he exaggerated the latter's merits, it was not at the expense of any greater sculptor, for England had none to show. We may lament Rogers' ignorance of a genius like Blake who would have so well repaid his patronage ; but it needed the courageous vigour of a Lamb, or the instinct of a fellow-painter like Fuseli, to know how great was the designer of "Jerusalem" and "Job." It was, however, as a collector rather than as a critic of art that Rogers was best known to painters. It is difficult to discover exactly where now are the pictures he had—some are well known, such as the famous "Giorgione" Knight in Armour now in the National Gallery, and the Titian and Guido which he also bequeathed to the nation. The best account of his collection is that which appeared in the *Quarterly Review* (October 1888), written by Lady Eastlake, who was familiar with Rogers' house :—

"Foremost was a Raphael, 'Madonna and Child,' one of the master's sweetest compositions, the child standing with one foot on his mother's hand. It had been reduced by ruthless rubbings to a mere shadow, but the beauty was ineffaceable : hanging—how well remembered—in the best light on the left-hand wall in the drawing-room. Then two glorious Titians; one of them, 'Christ appearing to the Magdalene.' The impetuosity with which she has thrown herself on her knees is shown by the fluttering drapery of her sleeve, which is still buoyed up by the air : thus with a true painter's art telling the action of the previous moment. Nor was it the rank of the painters, more than the perfect taste, which had limited the collection to the most trust-

worthy or most characteristic specimens of each ; a genuine work, for example, the little ' St. George ' by Giorgione, the rarest of all masters ; the most *simpatica* specimen by Bassano, ' The Good Samaritan ; ' a curious cross unique in art, between two magnificent masters, as different as Padua is from Antwerp, being a subject from one of Mantegna's ' Triumphs ' (in Hampton Court Palace) Rubenized by the great Flemish master. This nicety of specimen extended even to the ' Strawberry Girl,' by our own Sir Joshua. Then there were portfolios of drawings by the old masters, early miniatures, etchings by Marc Antonio, Greek vases, antique gold ornaments, a chimney-piece by Flaxman, a cabinet decorated by Stothard, another carved by Chantrey, an antique female hand as a letter weight on the table, an antique female foot as a weight to the drawing-room door ; and lastly, Milton's receipt to the publisher for the five pounds he received for his ' Paradise Lost,' framed and glazed, and hanging on the door in the next room."

Among his friends Rogers numbered many of the best known artists of his day. His acquaintance, it is true, is limited rather by the bounds of " society " : as I have said, we hear nothing of Blake, and we hear nothing of Morland, nothing of Gainsborough, and not much of Fuseli : Rogers preferred the company of less eccentric geniuses, and for this we have no right to blame him. The greatest of his painter-acquaintances were certainly Reynolds in the old century, and Turner in the new. Of personal association with Turner there seems to have been little ; and Reynolds died when Rogers was twenty-nine ; but Rogers heard him deliver his last lecture in the Royal Academy, 10 December 1790. In connection with this Rogers used to tell the famous anecdote of Burke :—

" I was present when Sir Joshua Reynolds delivered his

last lecture at the Royal Academy. On entering the room, I found that a semicircle of chairs, immediately in front of the pulpit, was reserved for persons of distinction, being labelled 'Mr. Burke,' 'Mr. Boswell,' &c. &c.; and I, with other young men, was forced to station myself a good way off. During the lecture, a great crash was heard; and the company, fearing the building was about to come down, rushed towards the door. Presently, however, it appeared that there was no cause for alarm; and they endeavoured to resume their places; but, in consequence of the confusion, the reserved seats were now occupied by those who could first get into them; and I, pressing forwards, secured one of them. Sir Joshua concluded the lecture by saying, with great emotion, 'And I should desire that the last words which I should pronounce in this Academy and from this place might be the name of—Michael Angelo.' As he descended from the rostrum, Burke went up to him, took his hand, and said—

> 'The Angel ended, and in Adam's ear
> So charming left his voice, that he a while
> Thought him still speaking, still stood fix'd to hear.'"

Dyce also records an account of the purchase of "Puck":—

"The morning of the day on which Sir Joshua's 'Puck' was to be sold, Lord Farnborough and Dance the painter breakfasted with me; and we went to the sale together. When 'Puck' was put up, it excited such admiration that there was a general clapping of hands: yet it was knocked down to me at a comparatively trifling price. I walked home from the sale, a man carrying 'Puck' before me; and so well was the picture known, that more than one person, as they passed us in the street, called out, 'There it is!'"

The "trifling price" was £215, 10s. The "Puck" had been painted for "The Shakespeare Gallery," a collection of 170 pictures commissioned by Mr. Alderman Boydell, "who has done more for the British artists than all the print-sellers put together." [1] Boydell had given Sir Joshua £100 for the picture in 1789.

There was another collector of the time with whom Rogers stayed once—Beckford, author of *Vathek*, a man of sinister reputation, a reputation of which Byron speaks with considerable freedom in an early letter of his. His way of inviting Rogers was to send the following note :—

"If Mr. Rogers continues to feel any inclination to hear the secrets of the prison-house of Eblis unfolded, he may perhaps be inspired to appoint a day and a night for the purpose. Nothing would afford the Abbot of Fonthill higher gratification.

"Fonthill Abbey, *Thurd.*, *Oct.* 17, 1817."

Of that visit the only record appears to be that in Dyce's recollections :—

"I was on a visit to Lord Bath at Longleat, when I received a letter from Beckford inviting me to Fonthill. I went there, and stayed three days. On arriving at the gate, I was informed that neither my servant nor my horses could be admitted, but that Mr. Beckford's attendants and horses should be at my service. The other visitors at that time were Smith, who published *Views in Italy*, and a French ecclesiastic, a very elegant and accomplished man. During the day we used to drive about the beautiful grounds in pony-chaises. In the evening Beckford would amuse us by reading one of his unpublished works, or he would

[1] A Book for a Rainy Day, J. T. Smith, ed. W. Whitten, p. 235.

extemporise on the pianoforte, producing the most novel and charming melodies (which, by-the-by, his daughter, the Duchess of Hamilton, can do also).

"I was struck rather by the refinement than by the magnificence of the hospitality at Fonthill. I slept in a bedroom which opened into a gallery where lights were kept burning the whole night. In that gallery was a picture of St. Antonio, to which it was said that Beckford would sometimes steal and pay his devotions.

"Beckford read to me the two unprinted episodes to *Vathek;* and they are extremely fine, but very objectionable on account of their subjects. Indeed, they show that the mind of the author was, to a certain degree, diseased. The one is the story of a prince and princess, a brother and sister. . . . The other is a tale of a prince who is violently enamoured of a lady, and who, after pursuing her through various countries, at last overtakes her only to find her a corpse. . . . In one of these tales there is an exquisite description of a voyage down the Nile.

"Beckford is the author of two burlesque novels—*Azemia* and *The Elegant Enthusiast.* I have a copy of the former, which he presented to me. He read to me another tale which he had written—a satirical one. It was in French, and about a man who was ridiculously fond of dogs, &c. &c. I have been told that a part of his own life was shadowed out in it. This tale he never printed. In fact he had no wish to obtain literary reputation; he despised it.

"Beckford was eventually reduced to such straits, that he was obliged to part with his pictures one by one. The last picture which he sold to the National Gallery was Bellini's portrait of the Doge of Venice. It was hung up the very day on which Beckford died: the Duke of

Hamilton wrote a letter to me, requesting that it might be returned to the family; but his application came too late."

It is an unpleasantly grim picture that of the elderly connoisseur gloating over his indecent stories in the lonely magnificence of Fonthill; while there is an even grimmer pathos of the scene twenty-four years afterwards when the lack of money caused the hermit of sin to part with the pictures which were the glory of his house.

Among more modern painters Sir Thomas Lawrence was one of the numerous people who benefited by Rogers' bounty. That facile and popular painter had little knowledge of business, and no idea of keeping accounts; as he also had a passion for collecting old prints, he was not infrequently in difficulties. When he died in 1830 he was in debt both to Rogers and to Lord Dudley, the Ward on whom Rogers composed his well-known epigram. As to the merit of Lawrence's work Rogers anticipated modern criticism, but I cannot help thinking that he followed the great authority of Reynolds in doing so, rather than indulged in any independent strictures.

"Sir Thomas Lawrence has painted several very pleasing pictures of children; but generally his men are effeminate and his women meretricious. . . . Of his early portraits Sir Joshua Reynolds said, 'This young man has a great deal of talent, but there is an affectation in his style which he will never entirely shake off.'"

It seems curious that this very just censure on Lawrence's modish portraits should come from the man who could say: "This Last Supper by Raphael (Marc Antonio's engraving) is, I think, in all respects superior to that by Leonardo. The apostle on the right hand of Christ strikingly displays his indignation against the betrayal of his Lord by grasping the table-knife." It shows

from how real a tyranny of false admiration Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites delivered us; for Rogers had a real admiration for Leonardo's genius; it is only that he is led away by the name of Raphael, and by that curious passion for the falsely dramatic, the conventionally appropriate gesture and composition which banished the natural from European art, until it crept back through the *ateliers* of Paris.

With the Theatre Rogers was not on the most intimate terms. He was not, as Lamb, a real student of the drama; and his ideas of dramatic propriety were rather simple than sound. For instance, Dyce relates that he said:—

"Henderson was a truly great actor; his Hamlet and his Falstaff were equally good. He was a very fine reader too: in his comic readings superior, of course, to Mrs. Siddons; his John Gilpin was marvellous.

"He would frequently produce very unexpected 'effects' in his readings: for instance, in the passage of Collins' *Ode to Fear*—

> 'Or throws him on the ridgy steep
> Of some loose-hanging rock to sleep;'—

he would suddenly pause after the words 'loose-hanging rock,' and then, starting back as if in amazement, and lifting his arms above his head, he would slowly add—'to sleep!'"

Anything less real than this "effect" can scarcely be imagined. Mrs. Siddons was the actress with whom Rogers came into closest contact. For her he wrote an epilogue which she recited on her benefit night. The verses are pleasant enough, but quite undistinguished. While there is no doubting Mrs. Siddons' extreme genius as an actress,

as a woman she always strikes me as having been rather tiresome. She is so desperately correct, so anxious not to be coupled with mere "players," and withal so naïvely and unconsciously vain, that one can imagine her as anything but attractive. She ought to have had no private life. It was natural that her friends should, with the easy manners of the age, occasionally attempt to make fun of her, and it does not seem to have been a difficult task. Witness this story of Rogers :—

"Mrs. Siddons told me that one night as she stepped into her carriage to return home from the theatre, Sheridan suddenly jumped in after her. 'Mr. Sheridan,' she said, 'I trust that you will behave with all propriety: if you do not, I shall immediately let down the glass, and desire the servants to show you out.' Sheridan *did* behave with all propriety: 'but,' continued Mrs. Siddons, 'as soon as we had reached my house in Marlborough Street, and the footman had opened the carriage door—only think! the provoking wretch bolted out in the greatest haste and slunk away, as if anxious to escape unseen.'"

The only later actress who can be mentioned with the Siddons was her niece, Mrs. Kemble, who was one of Rogers' closest women acquaintances in his later years. She was really terrifying in private life. It is said of her that in New York once she was purchasing some draperies at one of the largest stores there. She gave no name or address. The assistants were worried. Could they ask this goddess anything? Mrs. Kemble began to leave. The manager ran after her to inquire where the goods were to go. Unfortunately he touched her. "Villain," cried Mrs. Kemble, "unhand me." And the man was so terrified that, although he was young and presumably an American, his hair turned white that night. Mrs. Siddons did not

produce an effect like that, but perhaps the reason is not that she was less terrible than Mrs. Kemble, but that the men of that later generation were more susceptible than their ancestors.

One of the few "Bohemian" friends Rogers had also belonged to this early period of his life—Arthur Murphy, the editor and playwright. He was always deep in debt, and Rogers gladly lent money to the friend of Johnson. He seems to have been an engaging rascal—he impressed Boswell with his "gentleman-like manners," and no doubt patronized the little Scotchman; and he told Rogers many amusing anecdotes, duly chronicled in the "Commonplace-book." Most of them are familiar, but some will bear repetition, as the earliest and best authenticated versions of old friends:—

"'Am I not in Heaven?' said a girl at High Mass. 'No, my dear,' said Murphy, 'there are not so many Bishops in Heaven.'

"'Great as Foote was on the stage,' said Murphy, 'he was greater in the green-room, and there I loved to attend him. One night when I was there the last Duke of Cumberland hurried in, saying, "I come every night to swallow all your good things." "Do you?" said Foote; "you must have a damned good digestion, for you never bring them up again."'"

When Foote proposed a venison feast at the "Crown and Anchor" to Murphy and Garrick, Dr. Schonberg and two other lawyers were engaged to it. None came but Foote, Murphy, and Garrick. The bill came to three guineas a head, and Foote wrote to the absentees for their shares. When Foote paid up, the waiter said: "This is a bad shilling, sir." "Is it?" replied Foote; "look at it, Davy." Garrick, who was half tipsy, said it was, and threw

it away. "Do you change it for him," said Foote; "you can make it go as far as anybody!"

When a collection for the poor players was proposed, all but Garrick attended the meeting. "He did set out," says Foote, "but as he turned the corner of the Adelphi he met the ghost of a shilling."

When L——, who had been sentenced to the pillory, saw Foote in the pump-room at Bath, whither he had been ordered for the jaundice: "Your looks mend," says L——. "Yes," says Foote, "I am washing the eggs from my face."

Murphy met Costello at Lord Camden's. "My wife and I," said Costello, "quarrelled, and we agreed to divide. I said to her—'I will take one side of the house and you the other.' I took the inside, and she took the outside."

There is just the slightest reference to the famous Master Betty in Rogers' recollections of Fox; but he does not say there how the boy-actor struck him, though Fox declared that Betty, in the play-scene in "Hamlet," was finer than Garrick. It would be rash to dismiss this opinion as absurd, for, although Betty did begin to act at the astonishingly early age of eleven, we must remember that many Elizabethan plays were acted successfully by boys, that all the girls' parts were taken by boys, and that people were to be found who insisted that the introduction of women on the stage was not a success, from the dramatic point of view. The famous "children of St. Paul's" vied with the children of the Queen's Chapel in courting the favour of the public; and there is a reference in the Introduction to Marston's *Malcontent* to the rivalry between the troupes in *decimo sexto* and those *in folio;* while we know from the lines in "Hamlet" that, commercially, the rivalry was serious. There is no reason, then, for dismissing as im-

possible Fox's opinion of Betty. The mimetic faculty is one that, most of all, is susceptible of quick development, and frequently the freshness of youthful intuition will be as effective as the result of study and experience.

Betty had an enormous success in Edinburgh in the winter of 1804; and thence came to London. Henry Mackenzie was an eager upholder of the claims of "the young Roscius," and wrote to Rogers in triumph when London opinion echoed the plaudits of Edinburgh. Rogers, at the time, was rather more enchanted with Betty than he used afterwards to admit. He told Mackenzie that "he certainly came up to the idea you had led me so long ago to form of him"; and made a rather pertinent comparison: "His acting may be compared to painting in water-colours —by-and-by it will acquire more force and body."

The great world of London was divided into Bettyites and anti-Bettyites; and the champions of the actor from Lilliput were not only more numerous but numbered those whose opinion to-day we would far rather trust.

Grey and Windham were not enthusiastic about him; indeed Grey denied him any merit at all—but what is that to set against the praise of Pitt (who adjourned the House to see him act) and of Fox, and the careful applause of Rogers and the admiration of Hazlitt?

Of course it was in theatrical society that Betty's triumph created most excitement. His huge prices—he used to command fifty guineas a night, a sum enormous for those days, and, I should think, exceptional now save for some music-hall stars—and the way in which he turned London's head, did not make for his popularity with his rivals. Mrs. Siddons refused to go and see him, and was frankly sceptical about his merits; and both she and Kemble withdrew from the stage during the Betty triumph,

—a course certainly sensible, but also an almost unexampled tribute to the boy-actor. Betty, although his first appearance was in Belfast, had nothing of the extravagant in his disposition; he retired at the mature age of thirty-three, and lived in luxury for fifty years on the fortune he had acquired in twenty-two.

Of Kemble Rogers had not a very high opinion. He thought he was considerably inferior to the Siddons, and thoroughly sympathized with the feelings of that actress when she said on the occasion of the great dinner to Kemble on his retirement, "I hope, Mr. Rogers, that one day justice will be done to women."[1] But then Rogers was, by temperament, a feminist; and the Siddons treated him with a deferential respect that he loved; and also he must have preferred her immovable gravity of character to the more volatile nature of Kemble. He was, however, on good enough terms with the great actor, and took Crabbe to the festival in his honour at the "Freemasons' Tavern" when Campbell's valedictory verses were recited, and when the great Talma was present. After his retirement, Kemble went to Switzerland, where Rogers visited him at Lausanne. There is no doubt that Kemble was inordinately conceited and proud of his talents; and Rogers was fond of saying that "he could make a fortune by buying Kemble at other people's valuation and selling him at his own." He used to insist that Kemble was terribly jealous of Mont Blanc, and got extremely vexed when he heard people perpetually asking, "How is Mont Blanc this morning?" Our age, with its fervid stage-hero worship, would have better suited John Philip Kemble than his own.

[1] Another version of this story is that Mrs. Siddons, who was always a little jealous of her brother's popularity, said, "Ah! Mr. Rogers, perhaps *in the next world* women will be more valued than they are in this." I'm not sure that this does not suit her character better.

Rogers' practical interest in politics was almost entirely personal. Apart from his great friendship with Fox, he knew nearly all the prominent politicians of that stormy period that were worth knowing, except Pitt. Rather surprisingly he was extremely convinced of the genius of those two memorable Irishmen, Grattan and Curran, and some pages of his " Recollections " are devoted to Grattan's conversation. It is of interest to note that Grattan anticipated a modern theory in mentioning Gibbon as a likely author of the letters of " Junius." It is true that he generously refuses to believe Gibbon could have written them, and expresses his own belief that it was Burke. What is most noticeable in this record is not the wit, but a kind of spiritual sadness, more intellectual than emotional, that is so marked a characteristic of the Irish temperament. One day he and Rogers discussed with which of the mighty dead they would sooner spend a day, if they could call up the spirits of the past.

" Which would you sooner pass a day with—Alexander, Cæsar, or Bonaparte ? " Rogers asked him.

" Cæsar," answered Grattan, " as I am much interested about his time (and here he enumerated many questions as to his campaigns), what were the real characters of many of his contemporaries—and I would ask him, but I would not press the question (he might answer it or not as he pleased), what part he took in the Catiline conspiracy.

" Of all men, if I could call up one, it should be Scipio Africanus. Hannibal was perhaps a greater Captain, but not so great and good a man. Epaminondas did not do so much. Themistocles was a rogue.

" Modern times have not furnished such men. It required the competition in little states.

" In modern times Washington, I believe, was the greatest man, and next to him, William the Third.

"Would you wish me to call up Cleopatra? Not much —*her beauty would make me sad, and she would tell me nothing but lies.* It is the same cry, is it not, that we hear from the modern Irish poet who sings of 'Beauty grown sad with its eternity.'"

In a grimmer vein are the two wonderful sayings on Burke and on Charles I. "Burke was so fond of arbitrary power, he could not sleep upon his pillow, unless he thought the King had a right to take it from under him;" and "Two artists contributed not a little to the popularity of Charles the First, Vandyke and the Headsman;" and how good, how modern his retort on Johnson's foolish criticism of *Lycidas*. "Of what use is it?" "Ah! these things—*they take the mind out of the dirt*, as it were." And does not this sentence on Pitt and Fox sum up the truth of that great political battle, in which they were protagonists:—

"Pitt would be right nineteen times for once that Fox would be right; but that once would be worth all the rest. The heart is wiser than the schools."

Nowhere, I think, do we get a better idea of this great Irishman who conquered a hostile House of Commons by the power of his eloquence, in spite of his gesture and his accent, so singular to English stolidity and conceit, than in Rogers' brief recollections. At a time when the Irish were considered to be half-barbarians, it needed the genius of a Grattan to bend the pride of Pitt, and make even the flippant Canning give him his attention. Of all Rogers' friends, except Fox, Grattan is the most attractive; and we think the higher of Rogers' character that Grattan found in him a man with whom he could be so intimate. This leader of the long roll of modern patriots, produced by the English policy in Ireland, still stands, with the gracious figure of Robert Emmet, as the most lovable, this master

of language who "like Louis XIV. returns the bow of a child."

John Philpot Curran, the great lawyer, is not so pleasant a figure. The law had bitten too much into his nature, and he had all the faults of a man accustomed to weigh not the truth of a theory, but the evidence, the amount of truth likely to leak out. Also he was fonder, one gathers, of praise and popularity than was Grattan; and was, in some ways, an Irishman of the kind that has led to the creation of that most horrible of caricatures, the stage Irishman ready to please, ready to lie, and ready to jest. He was, by all accounts, a brilliant talker; and Rogers laments that so little of "Curran's brilliant talk has been preserved," and censures Tom Moore for not preserving it. Byron pays tribute to his powers as a talker in his letters, and to his ability as a lawyer in a well-known passage in *Don Juan* comparing "Longbow" with "Strongbow" (Erskine). But Curran lacked dignity, although at times he could burst into a savage brutality of anger that would stun an opponent into silence. Rogers recorded an amusing instance in which the great talker met his equal.

"I once dined with Curran in the public room of the chief inn at Greenwich, when he talked a great deal, and, as usual, with considerable exaggeration. Speaking of something which he would *not* do on any inducement, he exclaimed vehemently, 'I had rather be hanged upon twenty gibbets.'—'Don't you think, sir, that *one* would be enough for you?' said a girl, a stranger, who was sitting at the table next to us. I wish you could have seen Curran's face. He was absolutely confounded—struck dumb."

I would sooner remember Curran, however, by that vigorously sad poem, in whose lines we can see the shadow of his life, spoiled by a disastrous marriage:—

"If sadly thinking, with spirits sinking,
Could more than drinking my cares compose,
A cure for sorrow from sighs I'd borrow
And hope to-morrow would end my days.
But as in wailing there's nought availing,
And Death unfailing will strike the blow,
Then for that reason, and for a season,
Let us be merry before we go.

To joy a stranger, a way-worn ranger,
In every danger my course I've run;
Now hope all ending, and Death befriending,
His last aid lending, my cares are done.
No more a rover, a hapless lover,
Those cares are over, and my glass runs low;
Then for that reason, and for a season
Let us be merry before we go."

Of Canning, chiefly remembered now as a wit, save by students of political history, Rogers had not many recollections. One story he tells is of interest, as Tom Moore made appreciation of it the touchstone of true humour. A rather dull old lady asked Canning, "Why they had so narrowed the entrance to Spring Gardens?" "My dear madam, because such fat people used to go through there," said the wag.

Of minor politicians, in his early life Rogers was most familiar with Horne Tooke, a man who had real gifts of repartee. Of the small part Rogers was forced to play in the political difficulties of the time I have already written, but of more general interest are the recollections of Tooke's conversation preserved by Rogers. There are several shrewd political sayings that show Tooke as rather in advance of his times. "Take the first man in Europe and

condemn him to live alone on his Estate. He would soon be devoured by the insects engendered there. He would cry out, 'Save me from my Estate.' What would he be but for the lower classes of Society?" In that sentence, barring certain quaintnesses of language, is summed up most modern arguments for an improvement in the land laws. It is a sound piece of criticism of Burke that "he is as metaphysical as he can be, with all his abuse of metaphysics." And what better comment can be made on our English legal system than this? "'The Law,' said Judge Ashurst in a charge, 'is open to all men, to the poor as well as to the rich.' *And so* is the London Tavern." According to Rogers it was Tooke who asked, when advised by his uncle to take a wife, "With all my heart, sir; whose wife shall I take?"—but the traditional ascription of this to Sheridan seems more likely. It was certainly Horne Tooke, however, who, when he was a candidate for Westminster, was accosted by O'Brien. "So I understand, Mr. Tooke, you have all the blackguards in London with you." "I am happy to have it, sir, on such good authority," answered Tooke. And the spirit of his Radicalism burst through his retort to Lord Grey, who said in public: "If I was compelled to make a choice, I should not hesitate to prefer despotism to anarchy." "Then you would do," replied Tooke, "as your ancestors did at the Reformation. They rejected Purgatory and kept Hell."

The only man who is said to have succeeded in browbeating Tooke was the Lord Chancellor Thurlow, whose influence we, of a politer age, find it rather difficult to understand. His method of controversy seems to have been sheer brutality; and he was cruel even in ordinary conversation. Lord Holland said, "No one could be as wise as Thurlow looks;" but his manner and appearance seem

to have taken in most of his contemporaries, except James Hare, and, so his biographer avows,[1] Dr. Horsley, Bishop of St. Asaph. Horsley had been promoted by Thurlow, who appreciated his part in the controversy with Priestley, and the Lord Chancellor seems to have had a high opinion of the divine. Still, when Horsley asked Thurlow to come and hear him preach, all the reply he got was, "Damn it, no. I hear you talk nonsense enough in the House, when I can contradict you, and I do; but I'll be damned if I come and listen to you when I can't."

Of his usual manner the following anecdote told by Lady Charlemont to the late Mr. Augustus J. C. Hare is sufficiently illustrative:—

"A clergyman desirous of a living went to the Bishop of London and asked him for an introduction to the Lord Chancellor Thurlow. The Bishop said, 'I should be willing to give it, but an introduction from me would defeat the very end you have in view.'

"However the clergyman persisted in his request, and the introduction was given.

"The Lord Chancellor received him with fury. 'So that damned scoundrel the Bishop of London has given you an introduction; as it is he who has introduced you, you will certainly not get the living.' 'That is what the Bishop said, my lord,' replied the parson. 'Did the Bishop say so?' thundered Lord Thurlow; 'then he's a damned liar, and I'll prove him so. You *shall* have the living,' and he did."

That Thurlow had dignity, however, the story of his retort to George IV. shows. He had asked for the Bishopric of Durham for his brother, and was reminded that as that Bishopric ranked as a principality, it could only be given

[1] Life of Bishop Horsley, H. H. Jebb, 1909, Arnold.

to a man of high rank and connexions. "That," replied Thurlow, "is the reason why I have asked for it for the brother of the Lord High Chancellor of England." It was George IV. who, when Prince of Wales, told Rogers two anecdotes of Thurlow. Rogers met the Prince at dinner at Erskine's, and it was the only time he ever met the first gentleman in Europe. "On that occasion the Prince was very agreeable and familiar. Among other anecdotes which he told us of Lord Thurlow, I remember these two. The first was: Thurlow once said to the Prince, 'Sir, your father will continue to be a popular king as long as he continues to go to church every Sunday, and to be faithful to that ugly woman, your mother; but you, sir, will never be popular.' The other was this: While his servants were carrying Thurlow upstairs to his bedroom, just before his death, they happened to let his legs strike against the banisters, upon which he muttered *the last words he ever spoke*—a frightful imprecation on all their souls."

The stories are of interest as showing George IV.'s pleasant taste in family anecdotes; and that Rogers, with all his Whiggery, was not proof against the bottle geniality of a Prince. But then all Whigs felt bound to uphold the Hanoverians, even in their cups.

Of Erskine, at whose house Rogers met the Prince, there are some good reminiscences. He was, of course, a Scotchman, and it is curious that one of the anecdotes recorded of him should uphold an ancient slander against that nation.

"To all letters soliciting his 'subscription' to anything, Erskine had a regular form of reply, viz., 'Sir, I feel much honoured by your application to me, and I beg to subscribe'—here the reader had to turn over the leaf—'myself your very ob. servant.'"

He was the author of that excellent epigram—

"The French have taste in all they do,
Which we are quite without;
For Nature, that to them gave *goût*,
To us gave only gout."

Erskine's defence of Horne Tooke, Thelwall and Hardy, was the crown of his career. "Erskine," says Rogers "(than whom nobody had ever more power over a jury—he would frequently address them as 'his little twelvers'), defended Tooke most admirably; nay, he showed himself not only a great orator, but a great actor; for, on the fifth day, when the Attorney-General, Eldon, was addressing the jury, and was using a line of argument which Erskine had not expected and could not reply to (the pleading for the prisoner being closed), I well remember how Erskine the whole time kept turning towards the jury, and by a series of significant looks, shrugs, and shakings of his head, did all he could to destroy the effect of what the Attorney-General was saying."

The only foreign statesman with whom Rogers was at all intimate was Talleyrand. That enigmatic figure was perfectly at home among the friends, for whom Holland House was the political centre. It was he who retorted so cuttingly on "Bobus" Smith, one of the handsomest men of the day. "Bobus" was speaking of the good looks of his mother. "C'était donc votre père qui n'était pas si bien." When he was asked if Napoleon shaved himself. "Always: though he is so long about it, shaving a little, and then conversing, if anybody was with him. A king by birth," said he, smiling, "is shaved by another. He who makes himself *Roi* shaves himself." He also told Rogers of one trying time he had with the Emperor.

TALLEYRAND

FROM AN ENGRAVING IN MACLISE'S "FRASER PORTRAITS"

"He (Bonaparte) was with the army of England at Boulogne,[1] when he heard of Mack's being at Ulm. 'If it had been mine to place him, I should have placed him there.' In an instant the army was in full march, and he in Paris.[2] I attended him to Strasburg,[3] and was alone with him in the house of the Prefet—in one of the chambers there—when he fell, and foamed at the mouth. 'Fermez la porte,' he cried, and from that moment lay as dead on the floor. Berthier came to the door. 'On ne peut pas entrer.' The Empress came to the door. 'On ne peut pas entrer.' In about half an hour he recovered, but what would have been my situation if he had died! Before daybreak he was in his carriage, and in less than sixty hours the Austrian army had capitulated." This was at Ulm.

Rogers told this story to Prince Lucien, "who listened with great sang-froid. 'Have you ever heard it before?' 'Never. It is an infirmity to which many great men have been subject—Cæsar among others. My brother was once before attacked in the same way, but then (he said with a smile) he was defeated I believe.'" And Rogers preserves the only story about Talleyrand which has in it a pathetic element. "When Lord Londonderry attacked Talleyrand in Parliament, and I defended him, saying, in everything as far as I had observed, he had always been fair and honest, Talleyrand burst into tears, saying, 'Il est le seul homme qui ait jamais dit du bien de moi.'" This was told Rogers by Wellington; is it on record that any other but he ever

[1] The army and flotilla had assembled at Boulogne, with the intention of invading or threatening England.

[2] Napoleon broke up the flotilla and army at Boulogne in the beginning of September 1805, and ordered the march of the army towards the Danube, where the Austrian armies were.

[3] Napoleon reached Strasburg on 26 September 1805.

made Talleyrand weep ? It is true that tenacious chameleon had not many who would ever defend him.

Lord Grenville, of whom it may be said that he shone rather by reflection of "All the Talents" than by any brilliant light of his own, was also a friend of Rogers. At his house in 1823 he gave Rogers some reminiscences of his political life, and a few personal opinions and recollections. His literary views were rather sounder than those of his brother, whose opinion of *Childe Harold* I have quoted. Lord Grenville praised that glorious piece of Elizabethan prose, one of the rare sun-lit islands in that great ocean Raleigh's *History of the World* :—

"O eloquent, just, and mighty Death ! whom none could advise, thou hast persuaded ; what none have dared, thou hast done ; and whom all the world have flattered, thou only hast cast out of the world and despised : thou hast drawn together all the far-stretched greatness, all the pride, cruelty, and ambition of man, and covered it all over with these two narrow words, HIC JACET."

That, Grenville said, "is one of the finest, if not the finest passage in English prose." A verdict with which, if we did not remember some of Shakespeare's superb and living sentences, we might have agreed.

With the bias of a politician when asked to name the three greatest Englishmen he added to the name of Newton, those of Bacon and Milton. Surely it is only the fact that he had mixed in affairs that could induce any one to give Bacon so prominent a place, for his philosophical and scientific acquirements, great as they were, are not, for their time, much greater than those of his earlier namesake. It is strange to note how the sentiment of the throne prevents Cromwell from having his due place.

Grenville's brother, Tom, gave Rogers an interesting

reminiscence of two great statesmen out of school. He said :—

" My father lived at Wooton, and, if I remember right, it was in 1767, when I was in my twelfth year, and my brother George and myself (Eton boys) were at home for the Midsummer holidays, that Lord Chatham and Lord Temple came there on a visit. We dined at three o'clock, and at half-past four sallied out to the Nine-Pin Alley ; where Lord Chatham and Lord Temple, two very tall men, the former in the fifty-ninth, the latter in the fifty-seventh year of his age, played for an hour and a half, each taking one of us for his partner. The Ladies sate by, looking on, and drinking their coffee ; and in our walk home, we stopped to regale ourselves with a syllabub under the Cow.

" The nine-pins were larger and heavier than any I have seen since ; and it was our business as youngsters, to set them up at the conclusion of every game."

In the later years of his life, as I have noticed, Rogers took less and less an intimate part in politics. He kept up his Whig acquaintances, and he was on friendly terms with many of the foremost politicians, Lord Grey, Lord Brougham, Lord Lansdowne, Lord John Russell. But the only man of whom he had preserved any considerable recollections was neither a Whig nor, except by the force of circumstances, a statesman—the Duke of Wellington ; and the recollections are chiefly military. The best of them have rarely been excelled for interest, except by some of Creevey's wonderful snatches of observation ; and they are not so well known to the present generation as they should be.

First we have some grim stories of the Peninsular Campaign.

" Don't drink of that well," said a Spanish woman to an English soldier. " Is it poisoned ? "—" Some French-

men are there," she replied, "and more than you can count." Whenever a Frenchman came and looked into it, she sent him in, headlong.

Gordon (afterwards killed at Waterloo) passed the night in an Osteria with some French officers, and no sooner were they asleep than a Spanish child in the room made gestures to Gordon, drawing the edge of his hand across his throat. "And why so?" said Gordon in the morning when they were gone.—"Because I knew you to be an Englishman by your sword and your spurs."

"Buonaparte, in my opinion, committed one of his greatest errors when he meddled with Spain; for the animosity of the people was unconquerable, and it was almost impossible to get us out of that Corner. I have often said it would be his ruin, though I might not live to see it. A conqueror, like a cannon-ball, must go on. If he rebounds, his career is over."

He told Rogers, too, the well-known story of the value he set on Napoleon's mere presence with the army. "At one time," he said, "I expected him there (in Spain) in person, and him by himself I should have regarded at least as an accession of forty thousand men,"—a generous estimate for one who was used to weigh his words.

There are two familiar little anecdotes which give more of the inside of the war than many purple descriptions of battles: each is a touch that might be Tolstoy's.

"In India I never undressed, it is not the custom there; and for many years in the Peninsula I undressed very seldom; *never for the first four years.*"

"War in Spain is much less of an evil than in other countries. There is no property to destroy. Enter a house, the walls are bare; there is no furniture."

This, too, is essentially the soldier's account of the

machinery of war. "——, when at our headquarters in Spain, wished to see an army, and I gave directions that he should be conducted through ours. When he returned, he said: 'I have seen nothing. Nothing but here and there little clusters of men in confusion; some cooking, some washing, and some sleeping.' 'Then you have seen an Army,' I said." It is quaint to notice how the Duke of Wellington anticipates in spirit the Chocolate-cream soldier of Mr. Shaw's *Arms and the Man*. The Duke's views on the commissariat department might be Bluntschli's, although not Mr. Shaw's. "Vegetable food is less convenient than animal food, the last walking with you."

Of histories of the war the Duke gave greatest praise, so far as the French movements were concerned, to one written in English with French notes, probably, as he suggested, "by some Irishman, then with Soult." Napier he called well-meaning; and, apparently in answer to a question of Rogers why he did not write himself, the Duke says, "I have indeed no time to write much as I might wish to do so; and I am still"—the conversation was at the end of 1827—"too much in the World to do it."

And there always remained that other objection: "I should much like to tell the truth; but if I did, I should be torn in pieces here or abroad."

Most of his recollections of Waterloo are worth transcribing as they are, as they have a vivid reality which tells one far more than any recasting of them.

"When Buonaparte left Elba for France, I was at Vienna, and received the news from Lord Burghersh, our Minister at Florence. The instant it came I communicated it to every member of the Congress, and all laughed; the Emperor of Russia most of all. 'What was in your letter to his Majesty this morning,' said his physician; 'for when

he broke the seal, he clapped his hands and burst out a-laughing ? ' Various were the conjectures as to whither he was gone, but none would hear of France. All were sure that in France he would be massacred by the people, when he appeared there. I remember Talleyrand's words so well : ' Pour la France—Non ! '

" Buonaparte I never saw, though during the battle (Waterloo) we were once, I understood, within a quarter of a mile of each other. I regret it much, for he was a most extraordinary man. To me he seems to have been at his acme at the Peace of Tilsit, and gradually to have declined afterwards.

" He would have done better, I think, to have stood on the defensive. Six hundred thousand men would have gathered round him, and the jostling of so many would have been terrible. If he had waited for his moment and attacked when and where he pleased from the centre, his success in one instance might have been fatal to the rest.

" At Waterloo he had the finest army he ever commanded ; and everything up to the onset, must have turned out as he wished. Indeed he could not have expected to beat the Prussians, as he did at Ligny, in four hours.

" But two such armies as those at Waterloo have seldom met, if I may judge from what they did on that day. It was a battle of giants ! a battle of giants !

" Many of my troops were new, but the new fight well, though they manœuvre ill ; better perhaps than many who have fought and bled.

" As to the way in which some of our ensigns and lieutenants braved dangers—the boys just come from school—it exceeds all belief. They ran as at Cricket.

" Very early in the day the Nassau Brigade were shifting their ground from an orchard ; and when I remonstrated

with them, they said in their excuse that the French were in such force near them. It was to no purpose that I pointed to our Guards on the right. It would not do ; and so bewildered were they, that they sent a few shots after me as I rode off. 'And with these men,' I said to the Corps Diplomatique who were with me, 'and with these men I am to win the battle.' They shrugged their shoulders.

"How did they behave in the action? Well enough; and it should be remembered that, as they had never served with us, we had not acquired their confidence. They had come over to us at Bayonne, having formed the rear-guard of the French Army in Spain ; and knowing, as they now did, that Buonaparte was in the field, their dread of him must have borne some proportion to the courage with which he had formerly inspired them.

"When all was over, Blucher and I met at La Maison Rouge. It was midnight when he came ; and riding up, he threw his arms round me, and kissed me on both cheeks as I sat in the saddle. I was then in pursuit ; and as his troops were fresh I halted mine, and left the business to him.

" In the day I was for some time encumbered with the Corps Diplomatique. They would not leave me, say what I would. We supped afterwards together between night and morning, in a spacious tent erected in the valley for that purpose. Pozzo di Borgo was there among others ; and, at my request, he sent off a messenger with the news to Ghent, where Louis XVIII. breakfasted every morning in a bow-window to the street, and where every morning the citizens assembled under it to gaze on him.

" When the messenger, a Russian, entered the room with the news, the King embraced him ; and all embraced him, and one another, all over the house.

" An Emissary of Rothschild was in the street, and no sooner did he see these demonstrations than he took wing for London. Not a syllable escaped his lips at Bruges, at Ostend, or at Margate ; nor, till Rothschild had taken his measures on the Stock Exchange, was the intelligence communicated to Lord Liverpool.

" On that day I rode Copenhagen from four in the morning till twelve at night. (And when I dismounted he threw up his heels at me as he went off.) If he fed it was on the standing corn, and as I sat in the saddle. He was a chestnut horse. (I rode him hundreds of miles in Spain and at the battle of Toulouse.) He died blind with age (twenty-eight years old) in 1835 at Strathfield Saye, where he lies buried within a ring fence.

" Two days before the battle of Waterloo the Duke came into Lady Mornington's room at Brussels, saying, ' Napoleon has invaded Belgium ; order horses and wait at Antwerp for further instructions.'

" When they were there (at Antwerp) Alava entered their room, waving a bloody handkerchief, and informed her that a Victory was gained, and that they must return forthwith to Brussels.

" She and her daughter had not been there (q. Brussels) half an hour when the Duke arrived, and walking up and down the apartment in a state of the greatest agitation, burst into tears, and uttered these memorable words : ' The next greatest misfortune to losing a battle is to gain such a Victory as this.' "

Rogers preserved in his Common-place Book a similar remark made by the Duke at another time. " What a glorious thing must be a victory, Sir ! " said —— to the Duke. " The greatest tragedy in the world, Madam ; except a defeat."

The Duke told Rogers that he had Cæsar's Commentaries in India; and we can see in these brief sentences that the style of the Roman had its effect on the Duke. There is nothing so like the *Bello Gallico* as these brief, pointed, nervous sentences.

How that laughter at Vienna rings still, and Talleyrand's muttered comment—surely to convince himself—"No, not France!" The reference to cricket in the account of the battle makes me wonder if here is the origin of that apocryphal story of the playing-fields of Eton.

There are a good many of the Duke's occasional remarks recorded by Rogers, but only one that I care to give. It gives his opinion of that saddest of Irish patriots, and that disastrous rising, whose shadow is not yet gone from the green hills.

"Wolfe Tone was a most extraordinary man, and his history is the most curious history of those times. With a hundred guineas in his pocket, unknown and unrecommended, he went to Paris in order to overturn the British Government in Ireland. He asked for a large force; Lord Edward Fitzgerald for a small one. Lord Edward was for assistance only, and was afraid of their control. They listened to Tone, but when their fleet arrived in Bantry Bay, the Irish would not rise to join them. Then it was, I believe, and for that purpose, that their religious feelings were worked upon, and from that time the dissension was religious. Before, it was political."

Unfortunately Rogers kept no diary in the later part of his life, and apparently made but few notes of the conversation of people whom he met constantly, such as Grey, Brougham, and Lord Holland. We can gather, however, from his letters how much he was in the confidence of the great Whig leaders. Here is a typical letter

to Richard Sharp on the political situation at the end of 1834 :—

"Holland House, 4 *December* 1834.

"My dear Friend,—The long and the short I believe to be this : The King is by all parties thought to be very honest but very nervous. Now, there are only two men in whom he has much confidence. To them he looks up—in them only does he think there is safety ; and having lost one, he resolved on the first occasion to call in the other, though well satisfied with Melbourne. If Lord Grey had remained in office, he would never, they say, have had recourse to the Duke.

"So the Whig ministers may thank themselves for having taken Lord Grey too readily at his word. The wish of his heart was to continue another year and to carry the two Church reforms, which he was confident he could have done.

"The first half of my story I believe, the last half I *know* to be true.

"If our friends Lord Holland and Lord Lansdowne had gone out with Lord Grey, which they ought to have done, Holland would have brought Lord Grey back, and we should now have been in office, or it would have brought in the Tories at once—a sad event, for they would then have had more time for entrenching themselves before another session, and for working mischief abroad.

"Would you like a little more of the graphic ? Six Ministers were assembled at dinner at Holland House, on the Friday night (the night of Lord Melbourne's return from Brighton), and dispersed, thinking themselves still in office. On that night, at half-past seven o'clock, Lord Palmerston called at the Treasury, and was shown in to Lord Melbourne, who had just alighted, and was sitting in his travelling cap,

by two candles, in a large room, his room of business. 'What news?' said Palmerston. 'What will surprise you,' said Melbourne, and, saying no more, he put into his hand a paper, containing the result of what had passed.

"What had passed was nothing like what it is said to be. It was very simple. The King did not tell the Queen till the next day, when she said, 'All England will rejoice in it;' to which he answered, 'That is as it may be, Madam.' (A favourite phrase with him.) Lord Grey at Howick is astounded — he thinks the measure not only unconstitutional, but illegal—for the Duke, being dictator, might run away with all the money. Lord Melbourne writes from Melbourne very naturally. 'I was never so happy, but I suppose I shall soon be d—d tired for want of something to do, as all are who leave office.'

"And now a word or two about Brougham. His vagaries in Scotland, for I followed in his wake, would fill a volume. His letter to Lord Lyndhurst and the answer I have seen. If you had any suspicions with regard to the moon before, what do you think now? Scarlett has also another competitor in Wetherall, for Wetherall could not be Irish Chancellor and Scarlett could. I earnestly wish that Scarlett may have what he wants, and I am told he is sure of it—Denman tells me so. In that case Wetherall must have the Duchy of Lancaster, for he neither could nor would go to Ireland.

"To return to the King. He has long taken a great dislike to Brougham, and his conduct lately has settled it. His antics and his taking the great seal across the Border without leave, brought on the crisis. He has worn him out, too, with correspondence, having assailed him with reams of paper, writing through Sir H. Taylor. He thinks he has great admissions in the King's answers through the same

channel, but forgets that the King, also, has his. His, I am told by those who have seen them, are beyond anything. But why, you will say, did the King write (or rather dictate)? He thought he must answer his Chancellor. All now is over, and I believe all are heartily sick of him. He wrote a second letter to Lord Lansdowne from Calais, still more urgent, and he has written a third retracting all. He has taken, I hear, his seat in the Institute.—Ever yours,

"S. R.

"Lord Melbourne communicated the news only to three persons overnight—the Foreign Secretary, the Home Secretary, and the Chancellor. Next morning it was in the *Times* and *Chronicle*. Who sent it? The two first say, we did not. The mischievous article was sent by him, I suppose, as a poisonous present to the *Times*, 'the Queen has done it all.' These things must destroy all confidence. Allen fights for him against all the world."

The reference to the moon is evidently a suggestion that Brougham was not quite responsible for his actions. Rogers was, of course, right in his deduction that Brougham sent the news to the *Times*. It was part of Lord Melbourne's indictment against Brougham afterwards, when he declared: "You domineered too much; you interfered with other departments, you encroached upon the province of the Prime Minister, you worked, as I believe, with the Press in a manner unbecoming the dignity of your station . . ."; and there is no doubt that Brougham was altogether an impossible colleague. Rogers was not the only acquaintance of his who suspected him of madness; and we can hardly doubt that Rogers, Creevey, and Greville were quite right in their judgement. Much may be put down to the in-

ordinate conceit of the man ; but not even the desire to shock his stolid monarch can excuse the Lord Chancellor taking the Great Seal to the fastnesses of Scotland. The whole of this mad episode in political history reads like a lost verse in *The Hunting of the Snark.* Rogers always kept on friendly terms with the ex-Lord Chancellor, and when he met with his accident Brougham by a series of letters kept him well advised of the public news.

CHAPTER VII

POETS AND WRITERS

TWO of Rogers' earliest literary acquaintances were two women, Mrs. Barbauld and Mrs. Joanna Baillie. Mrs. Barbauld, wife of a Presbyterian minister at Rosslyn Hill, got to know Rogers as early as 1787; and their friendship remained steadfast until Mrs. Barbauld's death in 1825. No one knows anything of her work now, except the lines, "Life, we've been long together," which Madame d'Arblay told Rogers (who had taught them to her) she repeated every night before she went to sleep. She was typical of the class of learned women—the "blue-stocking" among whom Mrs. Inchbald and Mrs. Montagu were notable.

In Mr. Nevinson's admirable imaginative sketch *A London Merchant* he tells an incident of "my grandfather." It sums up all the modern reader need know of Joanna Baillie. "Once when my aunts were young (incredible time!) he conducted them all—I suppose to the old Pump-Room, or to the Holly Bush Assembly Hall at Hampstead, where 'Conversaziones' were held—to hear Joanna Baillie recite one of her *Plays of the Passions*. I do not know which passion was the drama's theme, but the very title ought to have been warning enough. In the midst of the recitation he arose and to the word of command, 'My dears, this is no fit place for you!' he led his four daughters out in file from the dubious haunt of culture back to their home's security, leaving the astonished poetess to express

what passions she pleased. It is not for any dangerously passionate tendencies that people refrain from reading Joanna Baillie now."

There is a large blue edition of Miss Baillie's works, containing all the plays on all the passions, and very disappointing they are to those who are led astray by the promise of their titles. Joanna Baillie, whom Scott compared to Shakespeare, had not the dramatic instinct, yet her plays were enthusiastically admired. She was introduced to Rogers by Mrs. Barbauld; at that time she kept her authorship secret; in the curious language of Miss Aikin, "the unsuspected author lay snug in the asylum of her taciturnity." We have no record what opinion Rogers had of her work, although he shared the general interest in it; and at the famous dinner-party at his house at which Moore, Campbell, and Byron were present, the conversation was about Sir Walter Scott and Joanna Baillie, whose *The Family Legend* was then being played at Edinburgh.

The oldest of the greater poets with whom Rogers became at all friendly was George Crabbe, five years his senior; but curiously enough it was not until comparatively late in life that the two men became acquainted. I should not have expected the smooth, cultivated author of *The Pleasures of Memory* to have much feeling for Crabbe's sincere, sombre work; and at one time this evidently was so. In a letter, dated 29 September 1808, Wordsworth wrote to Rogers: "I am happy to find that we coincide in opinion about Crabbe's verses, for poetry in no sense can they be called. Sharp is also of the same opinion. I remember that I mentioned in my last that there was nothing in the last publication so good as the description of the parish workhouse, apothecary, &c. This

is true, and it is no less true that the passage which I commended is of no great merit, because the description, at the best of no high order, is, in the instance of the apothecary, inconsistent—that is, false. It no doubt sometimes happens, but, as far as my experience goes, very rarely, that country practitioners neglect and brutally treat their patients; but what kind of men are they who do so?—not apothecaries like Crabbe's professional, pragmatical coxcombs, 'all pride, generally neat, business, bustle, and conceit'—no, but drunken reprobates, frequenters of boxing-matches, cock-fightings, and horse-races. These are the men who are hard-hearted with their patients, but any man who attaches so much importance to his profession as to have strongly caught, in his dress and manner, the outward formalities of it, may easily indeed be much occupied with himself, but he will not behave towards his 'victims,' as Mr. Crabbe calls them, in the manner he has chosen to describe. After all, if the picture were true to nature, what claim would it have to be called poetry? At the best, it is the meanest kind of satire, except the merely personal. The sum of all is, that nineteen out of twenty of Crabbe's pictures are mere matters of fact, with which the Muses have just about as much to do as they have with a collection of medical reports or of law cases." This severe and unfair criticism evidently refers to *The Parish Register* issued in 1807. It is curious to hear Wordsworth complain of a poem's fidelity to nature: what he probably missed in Crabbe was that illuminating and imaginative truth, which does mark the best of his own country poems; but it is doubtful if the simpler poems in *Lyrical Ballads* would have been written at all, or at any rate written in the style which is now so familiar, if Crabbe had not issued first *The Village* and *The Newspaper*.

Rogers did not get to know the older poet until the second decade of the nineteenth century. Crabbe sent Rogers a copy of *The Borough;* and in June 1817 he came to London on a visit at Rogers' invitation, thirty-seven years after his first trial of the City, when he sought patronage and success—success which had, in its measure, come to him. It is a pleasant picture this, of the country parson-poet, now fifty-nine years old, proceeding under the kindly guidance of Rogers in a sort of sober triumph round the lions of London literary society. Crabbe records in his journal, with unaffected and natural pleasure, how he met Mr. and Mrs. Moore, " very pleasant and agreeable people ; " Mr. Campbell; Lord and Lady Holland; Kemble; Mr. Stothard; how he went to the play and saw Kemble in *Coriolanus,* and later " by engagement to see Miss O'Neill in Lady Spence's box." Except for one incident the visit seems to have been unalloyed pleasure to Crabbe—" a rich one," he writes—" I had new things to see, and was perhaps something of a novelty myself. Mr. Rogers introduced me to almost every man he is acquainted with, and in this number were comprehended all I was previously very desirous to obtain a knowledge of." The one unpleasant incident was a meeting with the Duchess of Rutland—which Rogers describes as follows, with a characteristic preface.

" The situation of domestic chaplain in a great family is generally a miserable one : what slights and mortifications attend it ! Crabbe had had his share of such troubles in the Duke of Rutland's family ; and I well remember that, at a London evening party, where the old Duchess of Rutland was present, he had a violent struggle with his feelings before he could prevail on himself to go up and pay his respects to her."

The following anecdote is a curious sign of how times change. I do not suppose that were Mr. Watson to declare himself in a London hotel, there would be any appreciable change in the attitude of the waiters ; or that the entry of Mr. Bridges into a coffee-room would cause a sensation. It is only possible for London to boast now that once she was as sensitive to art and artists as is the city on the Seine.

" Crabbe, after his literary reputation had been established, was staying for a few days at the Old Hummums ; but he was known to the people in the coffee-room and to the waiters merely as ' a Mr. Crabbe.' One forenoon, when he had gone out, a gentleman called on him, and, while expressing his regret at not finding him at home, happened to let drop the information that ' Mr. Crabbe was the celebrated poet.' The next time that Crabbe entered the coffee-room he was perfectly astonished at the sensation which he caused ; the company were all eagerness to look at him ; the waiters all officiousness to serve him."

Rogers' kindness to Crabbe is all the more meritorious because he evidently had little appreciation of what was most distinctive in his poetry. He could actually say that—

" Crabbe's early poetry is by far the best, as to *finish.* The conclusion of *The Library* is charmingly written :—

' Go on, then, son of Vision ! still pursue
Thy airy dreams—the world is dreaming too.
Ambition's lofty views, the pomp of state,
The pride of wealth, the splendours of the great,
Stripp'd of their mask, their cares and troubles known,
Are visions far less happy than thy own :
Go on ! and, while the sons of care complain,
Be wisely gay and innocently vain ;

While serious souls are by their fears undone,
Blow sportive bladders in the beamy sun,
And call them worlds! and bid the greatest show
More radiant colours in their worlds below:
Then, as they break, the slaves of care reprove,
And tell them, such are all the toys they love.'

"I asked him why he did not compose his later verses with equal care. He answered, 'Because my reputation is already made.' When he afterwards told me that he never produced more than *forty* verses a day, I said that he had better do as I do—stint himself to *four*.

"There is a familiarity in some parts of his *Tales* which makes one smile; yet it is by no means unpleasing; for example—

'Letters were sent when franks could be procur'd,
And when they could not silence was endur'd.'"

It is difficult to believe that Crabbe was quite serious in his answer to Rogers' question. We know that of all the contemporary poets, he most studied "the earlier and shorter poems of what is called the Lake School"; and this study had its considerable influence on him. He followed Truth, and there seems to me to be something not a little superficial in the criticism which denies to Crabbe the title of poet because his way of vision was not so splendid or so authentic as Wordsworth's or Keats'. Truth, if it be sincere, *felt* truth, not merely a catalogued accuracy, has a beauty of its own; it is impossible for a man, who can write at all, to express experienced truth in terms of anything but beauty, even though it be austere. The poetry of Crabbe has as legitimate a place in the history of Art as the painting of Teniers: for Crabbe has the

great secret, that all Art must have a motive beyond the mere description of a mood or an opinion, it must have some unifying passion, whether the passion for Truth, or for Beauty, or for Holiness. And as to which motive will inspire the artist, that is decided for him, as a rule, by that inalienable thing man calls temperament.

Modern criticism would precisely reverse Rogers' implied preference for Crabbe's earlier verse: it is true he only pleads for its superiority on the ground of *finish;* but the finish was not Crabbe's, it was part of the bad heritage he had not quite the strength to refuse, and no amount of finish would make his earlier verse better than, say, the description of the storm in *The Borough* :—

"Darkness begins to reign; the louder wind
Appals the weak, and awes the firmer mind;
But frights not him, whom evening and the spray
In part conceal—yon Prowler on his way;
Lo! he has something seen; he runs apace;
As if he feared companion in the chase;
He sees his prize, and now he turns again,
Slowly and sorrowing—'Was your search in vain?'
Gruffly he answers, ''tis a sorry sight,
A seaman's body; there'll be more to-night.'
Hark! to those sounds, they're from distress at sea.
How quick they come! What terrors may there be!
Yes, 'tis a driven vessel: I discern
Lights, signs of terror, gleaming from the stern;
Others behold them too, and from the town
In various parties seamen hurry down;
Their wives pursue, and damsels urged by dread,
Lest men so dear be into danger led;
Their head the gown has hooded, and their call
In this sad night is piercing like the squall;

They feel their kinds of power, and when they meet,
Chide, fondle, weep, dare, threaten, or entreat.
See one poor girl, all terror and alarm
Has fondly seized upon her lover's arm;
'Thou shalt not venture;' and he answers 'No!
I will not:'—still she cries, 'Thou shalt not go.'
No need of this; not here the stoutest boat
Can through such breakers, o'er such billows float;
Yet may they view these lights upon the beach
Which yield them hope, whom help can never reach."

Rogers crowned his kindness to Crabbe by trying to arrange for the publication of *The Tales of the Hall*, Crabbe's last book, issued in 1819, for which and the copyright of his other books Murray gave him £3000. Longmans—through Rees—only offered £1000, as Moore records in his diary; and while Rogers and Lord Holland were still deliberating over this offer, Crabbe accepted Murray's. I will let Moore give his vivid account of the first stage of the business:—

"Dec. 8th.— . . . Paddled back through the swimming streets to Rogers, who had fixed, too, for me to call. Found him in consternation about Crabbe, who had written to Murray immediately after the interview with Rees, to say he would accept his offer, but had not heard from him since. Rogers proposed we should go together to Murray, as he wanted to speak to him about his own poem, which he thinks of publishing with him in shares. Went to Murray, and after Rogers had talked to him about his own poem and told Murray that he was printing it himself, to see how it looked; he said carelessly, 'I am glad to find, Mr. Murray, that you have settled with Mr. Crabbe for his new work.' This clinched the business. Murray answered very cheerfully that he had, so we set off to poor

Crabbe (who was moping dismally at home and had nearly given up all hope of his thousands) to tell him the news, which, of course, set his mind perfectly at ease."

In that fine historical romance *Robert Emmet,* Mr. Stephen Gwynn gives us an imaginary conversation in Dublin about that successful Irishman, Thomas Moore. No doubt at a hundred tables in 1803 some such talk might have been heard. "Carthy," being fresh from London, was filling their ears with tales of young Tom Moore's amazing successes.

"'Anacreon Moore, they call him everywhere. Scarcely a day but you would see in the papers how Anacreon Moore has been delighting the company at sone grand house with his singing : the Prince carries him about like a pet dog.'

"'And do you tell me so?' said Mr. FitzGerald. 'Well, I little thought what was in store for that young lad when I used to hear him singing—the same songs I'll be bound—at his mother's little supper parties in Aminger Street.'

"'They tell me,' said Grey, 'he's got a good place for the old people from Lord Moira. Wasn't he a red-hot patriot when he was at college, Emmet?'

"'He was indeed. Almost too inflammatory. I knew him very intimately, and I knew quite well that he might get into a danger which he had not really contemplated. And he could have kept nothing from his mother. Poor, dear Tom—he had a beautiful affection for his parents.'

"'He has affection and to spare for more than his parents if half what we hear is true,' said Mr. Ling. 'I've seen songs in print by Mr. Thomas Little that give the measure of his young affections—full measure, I must say.'

"'I'm sure you never showed them to me, Phil,' said his aunt.

THOMAS MOORE

FROM THE PAINTING BY JOHN JACKSON, R.A., IN THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

"'Very right of him, too, Madam,' said Allen, with a grin. 'Moore may warble those things in private with his Prince; but if he sings them in public, I don't wonder that he makes a sensation.'

"'Don't be hard on Tom,' said Emmet. 'I shall be greatly deceived if he does not live to write songs that will make us proud to say we knew the writer. He has follies as much as any man, but there is a spirit in him which leaps out in music. I have heard him play one old air, an old Irish air, and I longed to be at the head of men marching to the tune of it. He will put spirit into Ireland with his songs one day.'"

In his long friendship with Rogers, which began in 1805 and continued till Moore's death in 1852, the Irishman saw a great deal of Rogers, and his diary is full of recollections of him. Indeed it is largely to his detailed account of days in London that we owe our knowledge of Rogers' circle; but it is not often that, in his social intercourse in London, we see the man of whom Emmet hoped to be proud, the man who said—"There exists no title of honour or distinction to which I could attach half so much value as that of being called your poet—the poet of the people of Ireland." This ambition caused him to repent of those earlier efforts, which Byron laughed at in the unforgettable lines:—

> "Thou shalt not steal from Samuel Rogers, nor
> Commit—flirtation with the Muse of Moore."

Rogers says of Moore's regret for his amorous poems:—

"So heartily has Moore repented of having published *Little's Poems*, that I have seen him shed tears—tears of deep contrition—when we were talking of them.

"Young ladies read his *Lalla Rookh* without being aware

(I presume) of the grossness of *The Veiled Prophet.* These lines by Mr. Sneyd are amusing enough :—

> '*Lalla Rookh*
> Is a naughty book
> By Thomas Moore,
> Who has written four,
> Each warmer
> Than the former,
> So the most recent
> Is the least decent.' "

Few poets have so fallen from their contemporary reputations as has Moore. Even those of his poems that are remembered—the *Irish Melodies*—are valued only for their sentiment, and they are terribly weak and watery beside those rose-red snatches of song which Dr. Douglas Hyde has collected and Englished. The trail of " his Prince " and the London season is over all Moore's work ; his poetry was an accomplishment, like Hook's improvisation ; he did not pursue it as an art. It is the poetry, too, of a man with whom popularity and social success are far more than anything else. Moore was a generous man ; in some ways he was Quixotic, but he was never quite free from a touch of snobbery : he adds duke to duke in his pursuit of high life in London. It was his remark that it was in " high life one meets the best society," that drew out Rogers' indignant denial, for Rogers never lost his sense of proportion as to the respective values of genius and rank, art and birth. Moore might have developed on very different lines had he stayed in Dublin, and continued his indiscreet patriotism. He might have gone singing to the scaffold, the bard of Emmet and the rising instead of the favourite poet of George IV. and the Court circle.

There were times, no doubt, when Moore felt that he had rather deserted: he records a conversation with Turner:—

". . . Had some talk with Turner in the evening. Mentioned to him my having sometimes thought of calling in the aid of the pencil in commemorating by some work or other the neighbourhood in which I have now so long resided . . . (but) he interrupted me by exclaiming, 'But Ireland, Mr. Moore, Ireland! There's the region connected with your name. Why not illustrate the whole life? I have often longed to go to that country; but am, I confess, afraid to venture myself there. Under the wing of Thomas Moore, however, I should be safe.'"

I cannot imagine Moore noting that down without a sigh at the "But Ireland, Mr. Moore, Ireland." Still he chose his lot; and we have no right to blame him. It may not have been in him to do more than come to England, and posture before London audiences, and tune "the Harp of Tara" in the streets of Babylon. But there is a curse on those who sing the Lord's song in a strange land: they are not visited, at the end, by the divine fire; and the vision of glory finds in them no windows open to the soul.

If you take the best of Moore's *Irish Melodies* there is something a little meretricious, something not quite genuine —a flaw in the sentiment. Leaving aside poems too hackneyed for clear judgement, such as *Silent, O Moyle,* or *The Last Rose,* read that vigorous piece of rhetoric *The Parallel:* it was written after Moore had read a book that set out to prove the Irish were Jews.

"Yes, sad one of Sion,—if closely resembling,
In shame and in sorrow, thy withered-up heart—
If drinking, deep, deep, of the same 'cup of trembling'
Could make us thy children, our parent thou art.

Like thee doth our nation lie conquered and broken,
And fallen from her head is the once royal crown;
In her streets, in her halls, Desolation hath spoken,
And 'while it is day yet her sun hath gone down.'

Like thine doth her exiles, 'mid dreams of returning,
Die far from the home it were life to behold;
Like thine do her sons, in the day of their mourning,
Remember the bright things that bless'd them of old!

Ah, well may we call her, like thee, 'the Forsaken,'
Her boldest are vanquished, her proudest are slaves;
And the harps of her minstrels, when gayest they waken,
Have breathings as sad as the wind over graves!

Yet hadst thou thy vengeance—yet came there the morrow
That shines out at last on the longest dark night,
When the sceptre that smote thee with slavery and sorrow
Was shivered at once, like a reed, in thy sight.

When that cup, which for others the proud Golden City
Had brimmed full of bitterness, drenched her own lips,
And the world she had trampled on heard, without pity,
The howl in her halls, and the cry from her ships.

When the curse Heaven keeps for the haughty came over
Her merchants rapacious, her rulers unjust,
And—a ruin, at last, for the earth-worm to cover—
The Lady of Kingdoms lay low in the dust."

How ironical sound those two lines—

"And the harps of her minstrels, when gayest they waken,
Have breathings as sad as the wind over graves!"—

coming from the pen of the gay, generous, prosperous, extravagant little man, who sold his talents in the English

market, and cheerfully spoiled the Egyptians. Still it would be unfair to accuse Moore of insincerity: it is merely that he had the light-heartedness of a frivolous nature—that he could turn easily from one mood to another; and that no mood lasted long. But on the whole I prefer him when he sings, so pleasantly that one can hardly blame him—

"Oh, 'tis sweet to think that, wherever we love,
We are sure to find something blissful and dear;
And that, when we are far from the lips that we love
We have but to make love to the lips we are near!"

or, with a better air, laments "the time I've lost in wooing":—

"The time I've lost in wooing,
In watching and pursuing
The light that lies
In Woman's eyes,
Has been my heart's undoing.
Though Wisdom oft has sought me,
I scorned the lore she brought me:
My only books
Were Woman's looks,
And folly's all they've taught me.

Her smile when Beauty granted,
I hung with gaze enchanted;
Like him, the Sprite,
Whom maids by night
Oft meet in glen that's haunted.
Like him, too, Beauty won me;
But while her eyes were on me—
If once their ray
Was turned away,
Oh! winds could not outrun me.

And are those follies going?
And is my proud heart growing
  Too cold or wise
  For brilliant eyes
Again to set it glowing?
No—vain, alas! the endeavour
From bonds so sweet to sever;—
  Poor Wisdom's chance
  Against a glance
Is now as weak as ever!"

Moore was a shrewd enough observer, when he was not contemplating dukes, and he has left a sketch of Rogers' methods and manner that is of no small interest. It is in a letter written to Lady Donegal in 1812, and it presents Rogers as rather a particular, fidgety and precise critic both of men and books—but still a critic, not a mere carper, not merely a stabber, not a complainer with a perpetual grievance. He writes at the time that he was occupied with *Lalla Rookh*, and the volatile Irishman is plainly discouraged at Rogers' deliberate and considered method of composition.

"Rogers and I had a very pleasant tour of it, though I felt throughout it all, as I always feel with him, that the fear of *losing* his good opinion almost embitters the *possession* of it, and that though in his society one *walks upon roses*, it is with constant apprehension of the *thorns* that are among them. . . . He left me rather out of conceit with my poem *Lalla Rookh* (as his fastidious criticism generally does), and I have returned to it with rather a humbled spirit; but I have already once altered my whole plan to please him, and I will do so no more, for I should make as long a voyage of it as his own *Columbus* if I attended to all his objections. His *general* opinion, however, of what I have

THOMAS MOORE

FROM AN ENGRAVING IN MACLISE'S "FRASER PORTRAITS"

done is very flattering; he only finds fault with *every part* of it in detail; and this you know is the style of his criticism of characters—' an *excellent* person, *but*——' "

Lady Donegal, who was a great friend of Rogers, accedes to Moore's description.

" Your description of Rogers is too like him. How vexatious it is that a man who has so much the power of pleasing and attaching people to him should mar the gifts of nature so entirely by giving way to that sickly and discontented turn of mind, which makes him dissatisfied with everything, and disappointed in all his views of life! Yet he can feel for others; and, notwithstanding this unfortunate habit he has given himself of dwelling upon the faults and follies of his friends, he really can feel attachment; and to you I am certain he is attached, though I acknowledge that the thorns sometimes make one wish to throw away the roses, and forego the pleasure to avoid the pain. But with all his faults I like him, though I know that he spares me no more than any other of his dear friends."

Nothing is to be gained by trying to level Rogers down to an amiable old gentleman who was indiscriminate in his affections and his dislikes. He was exceptionally kind to people unfortunately placed; and it is rather to his credit that he retained a faculty of active criticism towards the numerous friends and acquaintances he had among the fortunate, the wealthy, and the well-born. He provided a very needful quantity of vinegar to the social life of his time.

Another Irishman, born in 1782, and so three years younger than Moore, who had a meteoric success in the London of 1816 and 1817, was Charles Robert Maturin. No one now reads, few have even heard of *Bertram*, a play commended by Scott and Byron and Rogers, acted by

Kean, and the flaming success of a London season. It was produced on 9 May 1816, and was the author's one success. His career throws a most pleasing light on the generosity of Byron. He was mentioned to Byron by Scott, to whom he sent the manuscript of *Bertram*. Byron at this time was connected with Drury Lane, and persuaded Kean to accept the play. The cry of the manager looking for plays seems to have been much the same now as then. Byron complains: "When I belonged to the Drury Lane Committee, and was one of the sub-committee of management, the number of plays upon the shelves was about *five* hundred. Conceiving that amongst these there must be some of merit, in person and by proxy I caused an investigation. I do not think that of those which I saw there was one which could be conscientiously tolerated. There never were such things as most of them!" Byron had some difficulty in persuading Kean to take *Bertram*, and meanwhile Maturin was in want: we hear, not from Byron but from a letter of Murray's to Scott, that Byron gave him fifty guineas; a proceeding Murray scarcely approved of. A further plan of helping Maturin was suggested by Rogers, that he should get some of the profits of *Parisina* and the *Siege of Corinth*, but this Murray succeeded in stopping. After the success of *Bertram*, Maturin came to London. His second tragedy, *Manuel*, however, produced in 1817, was a failure, and Maturin henceforth disappears from Rogers' circle. The last references I find to him are in a letter of Byron's, who wrote in April 1817 to Rogers: "Maturin's second tragedy has, it seems, failed, for which I should not think anybody would be sorry except perhaps Sotheby,[1]

[1] An exceptionally bad playwright, who translated Wieland's Virgil and Homer. He died in 1835, aged seventy-six; and Wordsworth in a letter to Rogers at the time of his death refers to him as "the veteran Sotheby."

who I must say was capriciously and evilly entreated by the sub-committee about poor dear 'Ivan.' . . ." In a letter to Moore, however, Byron remembers another fellow-playwright of Maturin's who will not weep at *Manuel's* failure: "So poor dear Mr. Maturin's second tragedy has been neglected by the discerning public! . . . Coleridge will be damned glad of this, and damned without being glad if ever his own plays come upon the stage." Coleridge had resented the Drury Lane Committee preferring Maturin's play to his, and wrote a bitter criticism of *Bertram* that may be still found in *Biographia Literaria.*

It is curious to think that of all the group of people that gathered round Rogers at this time, Maturin was the only one who was to have, besides Byron, anything resembling a reputation on the Continent in his own lifetime —a reputation enhanced afterward by the praise of Balzac. This reputation was not based on *Bertram*—though Balzac refers to it in *Un grande homme de Province à Paris:* "Un gros bon melodrame entitulé Bertram, pièce imitée d'une tragédie de Maturin qu'estimaient infinitement Nodier, Lord Byron et Walter Scott, mais qui n'obtint aucun succès à Paris"—but on *Melmoth the Wanderer,* that amazing novel in which Maturin exceeds, and surpasses, the badnesses and the excellences of the "Gothic" school of fiction—that curious orchid of literature, sown by Walpole and Mrs. Radcliffe and flowering in "Monk" Lewis and Maturin. Balzac could put together "la type du Don Juan de Molière, du Faust de Goethe, du Manfred de Byron et du Melmoth de Maturin. Grand images tracées par les plus grands génies de l'Europe." This is a verdict which no one could echo to-day, except possibly with regard to *Manfred;* but that would be not because we esteem Maturin as much, but because we place Byron lower than did Balzac. Still

there is in *Melmoth* not only a great deal of rather horrible bloody bombast, more like the lesser Elizabethans than anything else, but some good, terrible writing and a perfect plethora of fine ideas which would furnish half a dozen of our modern anæmic novelists. Also in *Melmoth,* Maturin displays no little sense of humour, a real faculty for psychological analysis, which is even further exemplified in *Women* and *The Wild Irish Boy,* two books which anticipate in an odd, hesitant way the methods of such modern authors as Turgenev and Henry James.[1] The qualities of Maturin's books, except *Bertram,* do not seem to have struck his contemporaries much: he probably suffered from living in Ireland, and also from being a clergyman: but nothing quite explains why *Melmoth* should fall comparatively flat on ears that were so pleased with the lesser thunder of "Monk" Lewis.

Lewis, while his writings were admired, himself inspired feelings of little but ridicule. He was inordinately conceited, and even more eager for the attention of the great than was Thomas Moore. He had a certain inventive faculty, and a shrewd idea where to gather his material; and no doubt a love of the rather carelessly gruesome was part of his character. Rogers used to tell two stories of Lewis, one of which may be quoted as typical of the kind of mysterious horror that thrilled our great-grandparents.

Lord Howth's Rat

Tom Sheridan was shooting on the moors in Ireland, and lost his dog. A day or two after, it made its appearance, following an Irish labourer. It was restored to Sheridan, who remarked to the labourer that "the dog

[1] Why does no publisher issue a reprint of Maturin's better works? There should be an audience for them, if only in Ireland.

seemed very familiar with him." The answer was, " Yes, it follows me, as the rat did Lord Howth."

An inquiry about this rat drew forth what is now to be told. Lord Howth, having dissipated his property, retired in very low spirits to a lonely chateau on the sea-coast. One stormy night a vessel was seen to go down; and next morning a raft was beheld floating towards the shore. As it approached, the bystanders were surprised to find that it was guided by a lady, who presently stepped upon the beach. She was exquisitely beautiful, but they were unable to discover who or what she was, for she spoke in an unknown tongue. Lord Howth was struck with great pity for this unknown stranger, and conducted her to his chateau. There she remained a considerable time, when he became violently enamoured of her, and at last asked her to become his wife. She (having now learned the English language) thanked him for the honour he had intended her, but declared in the most positive terms that she could never be his. She then earnestly advised him to marry a certain lady of a neighbouring county. He followed her advice, paid his addresses to the lady, and was accepted. Before the marriage, the beautiful stranger took a ribbon from her hair, and binding it round the wrist of Lord Howth, said, " Your happiness depends on your never parting with this ribbon." He assured her that it should remain constantly on his wrist. She then disappeared, and was never seen again. The marriage took place. The ribbon was a matter of much curiosity and wonder to the bride; and one night, while Lord Howth was asleep, she removed it from his wrist, and carried it to the fire, that she might read the characters inscribed upon it. Accidentally she let the flame reach it, and it was consumed. Some time after, Lord Howth was giving a grand banquet

in his hall, when the company were suddenly disturbed by the barking of dogs. This, the servants said, was occasioned by a rat which the dogs were pursuing. Presently the rat, followed by the dogs, entered the hall. It mounted on the table, and running up to Lord Howth, stared at him earnestly with its bright black eyes. He saved its life; and from that moment it never quitted him: wherever he was, alone or with his friends, there was the rat. At last the society of the rat became very disagreeable to Lord Howth, and his brother urged him to leave Ireland for a time, that he might get rid of it. He did so, and proceeded to Marseilles, accompanied by his brother. They had just arrived at that place, and were sitting in the room of an hotel, when the door opened, and in came the rat. It was dripping wet, and went straight to the fire to dry itself. Lord Howth's brother, greatly enraged at the intrusion, seized the poker, and dashed out its brains. "You have murdered me," cried Lord Howth, and instantly expired.

The tales are really rather better than Lewis' more finished work: for when he was writing—at any rate in *The Monk*—he always overelaborated, and the language is far too grandiose for the idea. This is a fault of Maturin's, but he is kept from Lewis' more ridiculous extravagances by a certain seasoning of salt. Take the concluding scene of the story of *Isidora*:—

"After a sumptuous banquet, dancing was renewed in the spacious hall, and Isidora followed the company thither with a beating heart. Twelve was the hour at which Melmoth had promised to meet her, and by the clock, which was placed over the door of the hall, she saw it wanted but a quarter to twelve. The hand moved on—

it arrived at the hour—the clock struck! Isidora, whose eyes had been riveted on its movements, now withdrew them in despair. At the moment she felt her arm gently touched, and one of the maskers, bending towards her, whispered, 'I am here!' and he added the sign which Melmoth and she had agreed on as the signal of their meeting. Isidora, unable to reply, could only return the sign. 'Make haste,' he added—'all is arranged for your flight—there is not a moment to be lost—I will leave you now, but meet me in a few moments in the western portico—the lamps are extinguished there, and the servants have neglected to relight them—be silent and be swift!' He disappeared as he spoke, and Isidora, after a few moments, followed him. Though the portico was dark, a faint gleam from the splendidly illuminated rooms disclosed to her the figure of Melmoth. He drew her arm under his in silence, and proceeded to hurry her from the spot. 'Stop, villain, stop!' exclaimed the voice of her brother, who, followed by Montilla, sprung from the balcony. 'Where do you drag my sister?—and you, degraded wretch, where are you about to fly, and with whom?' Melmoth attempted to pass him, supporting Isidora with one arm, while the other was extended to repel his approach; but Fernan, drawing his sword, placed himself directly in their way, at the same time calling on Montilla to raise the household, and tear Isidora from his arms. 'Off, fool—off!' exclaimed Melmoth. 'Rush not on destruction—I seek not your life—one victim of your house is enough—let us pass ere you perish!' 'Boaster, prove your words!' said Fernan, making a desperate thrust at him, which Melmoth coolly put by with his hand. 'Draw, coward!' cried Fernan, rendered furious by this action. 'My next will be more successful!' Melmoth slowly drew his sword. 'Boy!'

said he, in an awful voice—'if I turn this point against you, your life is not worth a moment's purchase—be wise and let us pass.' Fernan made no answer but by a fierce attack, which was instantly met by his antagonist.

"The shrieks of Isidora had now reached the ears of the revellers, who rushed in crowds to the garden—the servants followed them with flambeaux snatched from the walls adorned for this ill-omened festival, and the scene of the combat was in a moment as light as day, and surrounded by a hundred spectators.

"'Part them—part them—save them!' shrieked Isidora, writhing at the feet of her father and mother, who, with the rest, were gazing in stupid horror at the scene. 'Save my brother—save my husband!' The whole dreadful truth rushed on Donna Clara's mind at these words, and casting a conscious look at the terrified priest, she fell to the ground. The combat was short as it was unequal—in two moments Melmoth passed his sword twice through the body of Fernan, who sunk beside Isidora, and expired! There was a universal pause of horror for some moments. At length a cry of 'Seize the murderer!' burst from every lip, and the crowd began to close around Melmoth. He attempted no defence. He retreated a few paces, and sheathing his sword, waved them back only with his arm; and this movement, that seemed to announce an internal power above all physical force, had the effect of nailing every spectator to the spot where he stood.

"The light of the torches, which the trembling servants held up to gaze on him, fell full on his countenance, and the voices of a few shuddering speakers exclaimed, 'MELMOTH THE WANDERER!' 'I am—I am!' said that unfortunate being—'and who now will oppose my passing—who will become my companion?—I seek not to injure now—but I

will not be detained. Would that breathless fool had yielded to my bidding, not to my sword—there was but one human chord that vibrated in my heart—it is broken to-night, and for ever! I will never tempt woman more! Why should the whirlwind, that can shake mountains, and overwhelm cities with its breath, descend to scatter the leaves of the rose-bud?' As he spoke, his eyes fell on the form of Isidora which lay at his feet extended beside that of Fernan. He bent over it for a moment—a pulsation like returning life agitated her frame. He bent nearer—he whispered, unheard by the rest, 'Isidora, will you fly with me—this is the moment—every arm is paralysed—every mind is frozen to its centre!—Isidora, rise and fly with me—this is your hour of safety!' Isidora, who recognised the voice but not the speaker, raised herself for a moment—looked on Melmoth—cast a glance on the bleeding bosom of Fernan, and fell on it dyed in that blood. Melmoth started up—there was a slight movement of hostility among some of the guests—he turned one brief and withering glance on them—they stood every man his hand on his sword, without the power to draw them, and the very domestics held up the torches in their trembling hands, as if with involuntary awe they were lighting him out. So he passed on unmolested among the groups, till he reached the spot where Aliaga, stupefied with horror, stood beside the bodies of his son and daughter. 'Wretched old man!' he exclaimed, looking on him as the unhappy father strained his glazing and dilated eyes to see who spoke to him, and at length with difficulty recognised the form of *the stranger*—the companion of his fearful journey some months past—'wretched old man—you were warned—but you neglected the warning—I adjured you to save your daughter—*I best* knew her danger—you saved your gold—now estimate the

value of the dross you grasped, and the precious ore you dropped! *I stood between myself and her*—I warned—I menaced—it was not for me to intreat. Wretched old man —see the result!'—and he turned slowly to depart. An involuntary sound of execration and horror, half a howl and half a hiss, pursued his parting steps, and the priest, with a dignity that more became his profession than his character, exclaimed aloud, 'Depart accursed, and trouble us not—go, cursing and to curse.' 'I go conquering and to conquer,' answered Melmoth, with wild and fierce triumph —'wretches! your vices, your passions, and your weaknesses, make you my victims. Upbraid yourselves, and not me. Heroes in your guilt, but cowards in your despair, you would kneel at my feet for the terrible immunity with which I pass through you at this moment. I go accursed of every human heart, yet untouched by one human hand!' As he retired slowly, the murmur of suppressed but instinctive and irrepressible horror and hatred burst from the group. He passed on scowling at them like a lion on a pack of bayed hounds, and departed unmolested—unassayed—no weapon was drawn—no arm was lifted—the mark was on his brow—and those who could read it knew that all human power was alike forceless and needless,—and those who could not succumbed in passive horror. Every sword was in its sheath as Melmoth quitted the garden. 'Leave him to God!' was the universal exclamation. 'You could not leave him in worse hands,' exclaimed Fra Jose. 'He will certainly be damned—and—that is some comfort to this afflicted family.'"

Despite the thin vehemence of the dialogue, the fluent antithesis of speech even in conversation, Maturin writes better than the authors he imitates; and he is immeasurably superior in description: how good, for instance, is the

touch: "The very domestics held up the torches in their trembling hands, *as if with involuntary awe they were lighting him out.*" The Gothic school of fiction, in its neglect of nature, its love for the gorgeous and the grimy, its absorption in blood and lust, had grave faults; but it did produce one book which, impossible as it is in construction and frequently poor in style, has pages that can justly be described as the work of genius, "la grande création satanique du révérend Maturin."

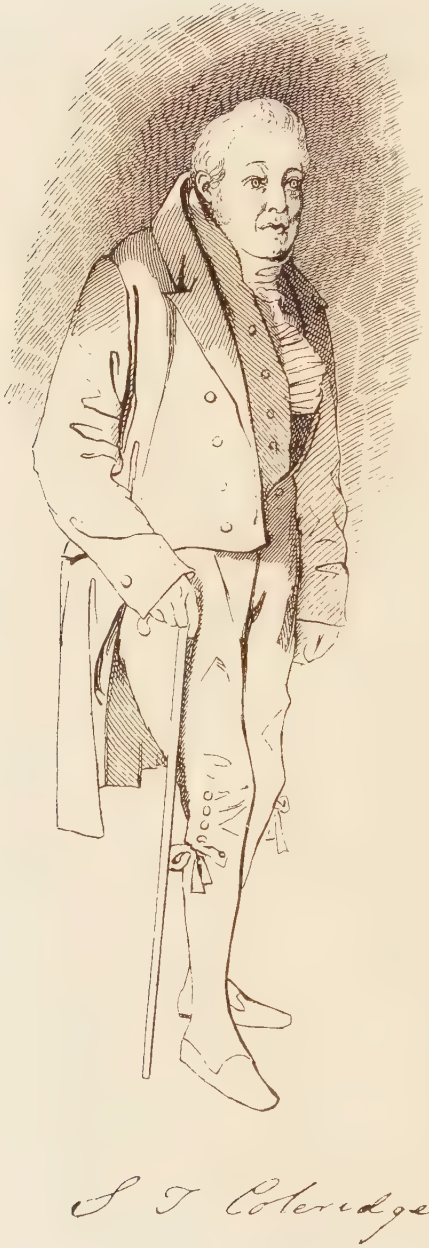
CHAPTER VIII

COLERIDGE, WORDSWORTH, AND SCOTT

WITH the greater poets of his age Rogers was on terms of intimacy with two—Wordsworth and Byron. Coleridge, whose first impressions of him were so unfavourable, he got to know fairly well, and overcame his early enmity ; Shelley he never saw anything of, save on the occasion of the famous visit to Byron at Pisa. Keats he seems never to have met, and his work is strangely ignored in his letters and reported conversations. Nothing perhaps shows so well how limited even the widest literary coterie can be than this neglect of the man who, of all his contemporaries, was the sincerest devotee of pure beauty of form and idea. It gives us some conception of the crassness of the prejudice, and the bitterness of the opposition which Keats' poetry had to surmount. Byron, with his cynical savage interest in his fellow-poets, can find time for reference to Keats ; but Rogers, the leisured and learned dilettante, can afford to pass by the poet whose scented charm and magic of verse outmoded the thin gracefulness of his own early work.

There are some recollections of Coleridge in Dyce's *Table-talk*. Two are most characteristic. " In Milton's description of the lazar-house there is a dreadful confusion of metaphor :—

> ' Sight so deform what *heart of rock* could long
> *Dry-eyed* behold ? '



COLERIDGE IN OLD AGE

FROM THE CARICATURE BY MACLISE IN "FRASER PORTRAITS"

I once observed this to Coleridge, who told Wordsworth he could not sleep all the next night for thinking of it." The other is a record of a remark of Southey that sums up with a surprising fidelity the inspired tragedy of Coleridge's life : "The moment," said Southey, "anything assumes the shape of a duty, Coleridge felt himself incapable of discharging it." This may be compared with Coleridge's own way of putting the same thing. "The moral obligation is to me so very strong a stimulant, that in nine cases out of ten it acts as a narcotic. The blow that should rouse, *stuns* me."

Rogers does not seem to have appreciated the marvellous poetic genius of Coleridge ; as nearly all his contemporaries, save Lamb and in a lesser degree Wordsworth, Rogers had not the necessary detachment to see the enormous change in poetic insight, in artistic taste, of which Coleridge, more than any other one man, was the herald. Chatterton had revived the feeling for the Gothic ; Blake had showed how well simple subjects and sublime subjects could be dealt with in simple direct language ; but Blake is wordy and diffuse, bombastic and absurd, when he is writing of strange and superhuman things. It remained for Coleridge to recover for English literature that effective simplicity of statement, in describing the horrible, the grotesque, the devilish, which had been lost since the days of the miracle plays. The early "Gothic" writers, whether German or English, got involved in a bewildering welter of high-sounding words directly they attempted the horrible. Walpole, Mrs. Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis—there is little to choose between. They employ all the panoply of terror, all the paraphernalia of fright ; and miss the real thrill that can only be given by the simple facts simply stated. Time and again these writers will

bring before us, as it were, the nodding plumes, the dragged chains, the hollow groans, the black horses, the sable hearse; but they forget that a funeral is not really impressive unless there is a corpse: that all the chains in the armoury of the middle ages will not make up for the absence of the ghost. Coleridge, with the minimum of descriptive agony, with the plainest of methods, conveys a real, a spiritual, aye and a physical sense of horror that outweighs all the efforts of his predecessors. What child who had the happiness of reading *The Ancient Mariner* in his childhood can ever forget the new sensation that the bare verisimilitude of the thing created: the keen directness of statement in describing unimaginable terrors. Who can forget his first reading of

"All in a hot and copper sky
The bloody sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.
Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, no breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.
Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.
The very deep did rot: O Christ,
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.
About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue, and white."

How effective is the use of so familiar a word as "stuck"; the introduction of that mere practical fact, "the very boards did shrink"; and then in the last two verses the sudden arrival of things inhuman and unknown, chronicled in the same ghastly simple way—"the slimy things with legs," and that superb comparison, "like a witch's oils." To read *The Ancient Mariner*, with all its supernatural terror, is to live in its surroundings, to be on the ship: in reading, say Maturin, we are conscious all the time that the author is as much surprised as we are at the strange events he is chronicling, that he is watching our emotions, and admiring his own daring.

Wordsworth did much for the revival of a natural and sincere poetry; but I think it should be recognized that Coleridge did even more. After all it was in the great tradition of English verse that the sublime and the matter-of-fact should be described simply; even the Elizabethans, so fond of bombast and mountainous words, can be simple enough, when they are dealing with the great things of life—

> "Cover her face: her eyes dazzle: she died young;"

or—

> "Is this the face that launched a thousand ships
> And burn'd the topless towers of Ilium? . . . .
> Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss!"

and in making simple poems about simple things Wordsworth was not innovating, he was simply recalling the sweet plainness of Herrick or Campion. But Coleridge, more mediæval in spirit than any other of that age, consciously or unconsciously applied the same straightforward precision of statement to the grotesque and terrible; and

so gave modern poetry a new tradition. There is evidence of the natural sympathies of his temperament in a letter written in May 1815 to Rogers, shortly after his return to Italy :—

" Dear Sir,—I rejoice that you have returned in safety, ' laetis quam laetus amicis,' and after having seen what no poet or philosopher can have seen in vain—the Benedictine Church of San Paolo fuori del Porto, the Moses of Michael Angelo, his prophets, sibyls, and the central picture in the Sistine Chapel, and (I hope that I may add) that rude but marvellous pre-existence of his genius in the Triumph of Death and its brother frescoes in the Cemetery at Pisa. This, and the Moses, were deeply interesting to me, the one as the first and stately upgrowth of painting out of the very heart of Christendom, underived from the ancients, and having a life of its own in the spirit of that revolution of which Christianity was effect, means and symbol ; the other, the same phenomenon in statuary, but unfollowed and unique, for there is no analogy to it in the unhappy attempt at picture petrification by Bernini, in whom a great genius was bewildered and lost by excess of fancy over imagination . . ."

It is only what we should expect that the frescoes of Gozzoli, and the naïve Last Judgement of Orcagna—the works that inspired the revival of Christian Art in Germany and in England—should appeal to the author of *Christabel* and *Kubla Khan*, who had the same singleness of vision and simplicity of purpose.

Nor, am I afraid, is it surprising that what Rogers had to say about Pisa in his *Italy*, is tucked away in a note :—

" I cannot dismiss Pisa without a line or two : for much

do I owe to her. If Time has levelled her ten thousand towers (for, like Lucca, she was 'torreggiata a guisa d'un boschetto') she has still her cathedral and her baptistery, her belfry and her cemetery; and from Time they have acquired more than they have lost.

> If many a noble monument is gone,
> That said how glorious in her day she was,
> There is a sacred place within her walls,
> Sacred and silent, save when they that die,
> Come there to rest, and they that live, to pray,
> For then are voices heard, crying to God,
> Where yet remain, apart from all things else,
> Four, such as nowhere on the earth are seen
> Assembled; and at even when the sun
> Sinks in the west, and in the east the moon
> As slowly rises, her great round displaying
> Over a City now so desolate—
> Such is the grandeur, such the solitude,
> Such their dominion in that solemn hour,
> We stand and gaze and wonder where we are,
> In this world or another."

"From Time they have acquired more than they have lost!" And I think sadly of some of the frescoes still faintly glowing through the mist of neglect, or triumphing even in decay, over the filthy, smirking tombs that eighteenth-century creatures crushed against their beauty; and more happily, remember those where the colour is still fresh, and gleams a background for the white figure of Nicolo Pisano, Italy's most wonderful thinker in stone, until the days of the master of the Medici tomb.

Just as the beauty of early Italian art was little but "quaintness" to Rogers and his friends, so the art of Coleridge was a hidden thing from them. The only poem

that he really admired was *Love*, which, with Collins' *Evening*, he described as one of the most enchanting lyrics in our language. "*Love* is so exquisitely musical that I had often repeated it to myself before I discovered that the first and third lines of each stanza do not rhyme." *Love*, with all its graceful beauty, is one of the least typical of Coleridge's poems: it is not so romantic in feeling as are most of his, and scarcely at all romantic in expression; it is Coleridge's one successful exercise in the older method, the unrevolutionary manner of verse. What Rogers could and did appreciate to the full in Coleridge was his wonderful capability for talking—the task that the poet's crowded brain found so much easier than writing. It is true that Coleridge's capacity in this direction was, at times, too much for Rogers, even as it was for most of his friends, except perhaps Keats and Lamb. Rogers records:—

"Coleridge was a marvellous talker. One morning, when Hookham Frere also breakfasted with me, Coleridge talked for three hours without intermission about poetry, and so admirably, that I wish every word he uttered had been written down.

"But sometimes his harangues were quite unintelligible, not only to myself, but to others. Wordsworth and I called upon him one forenoon, when he was in a lodging off Pall Mall. He talked uninterruptedly for about two hours, during which Wordsworth listened to him with profound attention, every now and then nodding his head as if in assent. On quitting the lodging, I said to Wordsworth, 'Well, for my own part, I could not make head or tail of Coleridge's oration; pray, did you understand it?' 'Not one syllable of it,' was Wordsworth's reply."

There was a dinner which Wordsworth gave in 1823,

at which Moore, Rogers, Coleridge, Lamb, Mary Lamb, and Crabb Robinson were all present. Three of the guests leave us characteristic little notes of that evening.

Moore, who did not love literary and metaphysical talk (he records of another day that "Wordsworth's excessive praise of *Christabel*, joined in by Cary, was far beyond my comprehension. The whole day dull enough"), has a patronizing word of praise for Lamb, "a clever fellow certainly, but full of villainous and abortive puns," and admits that Coleridge "told some tolerable things." Can't one see poor little Moore itching to go to the piano—if there was one—and sing some swinging song; instead of listening to Coleridge, as Crabb Robinson relates, "displaying his peculiar talent. I have not for years seen him in such excellent health and with so fine a flow of spirits. His discourse was addressed chiefly to Wordsworth, on points of metaphysical criticism, Rogers occasionally interposing a remark. *The only one of the poets who seemed not to enjoy himself was Moore.*" How different is the generous, fine note of Lamb's: "I dined in Parnassus with Wordsworth, Coleridge, Rogers, and Tom Moore—half the poets of England constellated in Gloucester Place. It was a delightful evening. Coleridge was in his finest vein of talk—had all the talk."

So let us leave Coleridge, having all the talk, while Wordsworth listens, Moore sulks, Rogers interposes, and Elia exults.

Wordsworth appealed far more to Rogers, both as a man and a poet, than did Coleridge. Rogers, like so many kind-hearted people, was fond of "managing": he loved to have control of people's affairs. And Wordsworth not only liked, but had a respect for Rogers, not unmingled

with that simple awe which so many country-folk feel to the townsman, who moves at ease in circumstances that abash and baffle the unaccustomed visitor. There are a great many letters of Wordsworth's to Rogers; but they are not, on the whole, of any particular interest. There are, however, a few notable criticisms on poetry. That on Crabbe I have quoted: far better, if severer, is one on Campbell's *Pleasures of Hope*, recorded by Dyce:—

"Wordsworth criticised it to me nearly *verbatim* as follows; nor could his criticism, I apprehend, be easily refuted. 'Campbell's *Pleasures of Hope* has been strangely overrated: its fine words and sounding lines please the generality of readers, who never stop to ask themselves the meaning of a passage. The lines—

> "Where Andes, giant of the western wave,
> With meteor-standard to the winds unfurl'd,
> Looks from his throne of clouds o'er half the world"—

are sheer nonsense—nothing more than a poetical indigestion. What has a giant to do with a star? What is a meteor-standard?—but it is useless to inquire what such stuff means. Once, at my house, Professor Wilson having spoken of those lines with great admiration, a very sensible and accomplished lady who happened to be present begged him to explain to her their meaning. He was extremely indignant; and, taking down the *Pleasures of Hope* from a shelf, read the lines aloud, and declared that they were splendid. "Well, sir," said the lady, "*but what do they mean?*" Dashing the book on the floor, he exclaimed in his broad Scottish accent, "I'll be damned if I can tell!"'"

In a letter early in 1813, Wordsworth quotes a rather cruel epigram, in reference to Scott's astonishing fecundity—

"Tom writes his verses with huge speed,
Faster than printer's boy can set 'em,
Faster far than we can read,
And only not so fast as we forget 'em."

A note in which he acknowledges Rogers' *Columbus* is pleasantly Wordsworthian, in its somewhat heavy jesting, but thoroughly indicative of what Rogers called "his joyous and communicative" nature:—

". . . I have to thank you for a present of your volume of poems, received some time since through the hands of Southey. I have read it with great pleasure. The *Columbus* is what you intended. It has many bright and striking passages, and poems upon this plan please better on a second perusal than the first. The *gaps* at first disappoint and vex you.

"There is a pretty piece in which you have done me the honour of imitating me, towards the conclusion particularly, where you must have remembered the Highland Girl. I like the poem much, but the first paragraph is hurt by two apostrophes to objects of different character, one to Luss and one to your sister, and the apostrophe is not a figure that, like Janus, carries two faces with a good grace.

"I am about to print (do not start) eight thousand lines, which is but a small portion of what I shall oppress the world with if strength and life do not fail me. I shall be content if the publication pays the expenses, for Mr. Scott and your friend Lord Byron flourishing at the rate they do, how can an honest poet hope to thrive?"

The ingenious avoidance of direct praise of *Columbus* is beautifully simple; and I can only hope that Rogers was deceived, as Wordsworth hoped and intended. Rarely does one meet with a briefer and more certain condemnation than "*Columbus* is what you meant it to be."

Towards the beginning of 1825 Rogers attempted to persuade Murray to publish a collected edition of Wordsworth's Poems; but the project fell through, mainly, no doubt, because, as Wordsworth said, Murray "is too great a personage for any one but a court, an aristocrat, or most fashionable author to deal with." So the honour of bringing out the edition was Longmans', who issued it in 1827 in five volumes, still familiar in form to lovers of poetry. Rogers had apparently suggested that Wordsworth might make a selection, but the poet answered: "As to your considerate proposal of making a selection of the most admired or the most popular, even were there not insuperable objections to it in my own feelings, I should be utterly at a loss how to proceed in that selection. Therefore I must abide by the above arrangement, and throw the management of the business upon your friendship."

According to Crabb Robinson, Rogers was willing to do for his friend what has since then been done by so many editors, notably Matthew Arnold, and edit a selection for him. Robinson gives the story as "a current anecdote that Rogers once said to Wordsworth, 'If you would let me edit your poems, and give me leave to omit some half dozen and make a few trifling alterations, I would engage that you should be as popular a poet as any living.' Wordsworth's answer is said to have been, 'I am much obliged to you, Mr. Rogers; I am a poor man, but I had rather remain as I am.'"

Mr. Clayden rather peremptorily dismisses the story on the grounds that "Wordsworth would not so have addressed Rogers"; but I think the half humorous refusal to be mutilated is quite in keeping with the playful tone of many of the letters. It would be a curious speculation as

to what difference a selection made so early would have brought to Wordsworth's reputation and popularity.

From the couple of references just quoted I think we may say that the gentle soul of Wordsworth was rather hurt at the enormous popularity of Scott. It seems incredible that any one should be other than enthusiastic over the success of that good genius of literature, the man who could write anything, and write many things supremely well. In spite of his lack of essential poetry; in spite of his false mediævalism; in spite of his occasional tediousness—Scott remains the greatest figure in literature since Shakespeare—yes, greater even than Goethe, who, with all his serene learning, knew more about living than life, and more about philosophy than reality. Beside Scott, Hugo appears a little theatrical, and Balzac smacks too much of sophisticated society; Turgenev is too remote from actuality, and Tolstoy too far removed from sanity. Scott has a central quality, a quality which may not make for the highest kind of poetry—though Shakespeare and Sophocles both have it—but does set its possessor supreme as a Creator of Life, as a maker of men and women.

Rogers' one tale of Scott, which is not so well known as it should be, is thus printed in the *Recollections*:—

"*Feb.* 1834.

"My dear Sir,—You asked me not long ago if I could recall any of his (Walter Scott's) conversation. Happy should I be if I could; but, with a single exception, I can only remember generally the charm which he threw around him wherever he came. That exception is, however, at your service.

"Sitting one day alone with him in your house (it was the day but one before he left it to embark at Portsmouth

for Malta), I led him, among other things, to tell me once again a story of himself which he had formerly told me, and which I had often wished to recover. When I returned home, I wrote it down, as nearly as I could, in his own words ; and here they are.

"The subject is an achievement worthy of Ulysses himself, and such as many of his school-fellows could, no doubt, have related of him ; but, I fear, I have done it no justice, though the story is so very characteristic that it should not be lost. The inimitable manner in which he told it—the glance of the eye, the turn of the head, and the light that played over his faded features as, one by one, the circumstances came back to him, accompanied by a thousand boyish feelings that had slept perhaps for years—these no language, not even his own, could convey to you ; but you can supply them. Would that others could do so, who had not the good fortune to know him !

"S. R.

"To his son-in-law, JOHN LOCKHART.

"There was a boy in my class at school who stood always at the top ; nor could I with all my efforts supplant him. Day passed after day and still he kept his place, do what I would ; till at length I observed that, when a question was asked him, he always fumbled with his fingers at a particular button in the lower part of his waistcoat. To remove it, therefore, became expedient in my eyes ; and in an evil moment it was removed with a knife. Great was my anxiety to know the success of my measure ; and it succeeded only too well. When the boy was again questioned, his fingers sought again for the button, but it was not to be found. In his distress he looked down for it ; it was to be seen no more than to be felt. He stood confounded, and

I took possession of his place ; nor did he ever recover it ; or ever, I believe, suspect who was the author of his wrong.

" Often in after-life has the sight of him smote me as I passed by him ; and often have I resolved to make him some reparation ; but it ended in good resolutions. Though I never renewed my acquaintance with him, I often saw him ; for he filled some inferior office in one of the Courts of law at Edinburgh. Poor fellow ! He took early to drinking, and I believe he is dead.

" Friday, Oct. 21, 1831, the day but one before he set off for Naples."

As might be judged from the letter to Lockhart, Rogers had a high opinion of Scott, and all we know of their intercourse shows that a real, if not very intimate friendship, existed between them. It is true that Crabb Robinson tells a tale that he took as evidence that Rogers was not much of a friend : he was at an evening party when Rogers and Flaxman were present. During the conversation, he reports : " Rogers, who knows all the gossip of literature, says that on the best authority he can affirm that Walter Scott has received £100,000 honorarium for his poems and other works, including the Scotch novels. Walter Scott is Rogers' friend, but Rogers did not oppose Flaxman's remark that his works have in no respect tended to improve the moral condition of mankind."

It is true that Rogers was rather ridden by the wretchedly vapid idea that literature, and the Arts generally, must be improving ; but we can surely believe, in this case, he kept silence because the sheer idiocy of Flaxman's comment prevented any but the rudest of replies. A man who could speak of the Waverley Novels as though they were so many handbooks to morality was beyond criticism : also it shows how largely the curse of the sophist and the

pseudo-philosopher had bitten into society that a man of sense like Flaxman could fail to see that, purely on ethical grounds, the imaginative work of Scott was worth a wilderness of jejune aphorisms.

It was at a dinner at Scott's, according to Moore, Rogers told that most admirable of "drunk" stories.

After a gorgeous supper, one of the company, more incapable than his fellows, was taken by them, and after the removal of some garments, was rolled in currant jelly. Then from a convenient pillow or bolster, feathers were brought, and once more the victim was rolled. Then he was turned loose. The processes he had gone through had roused him a little, and he wandered aimlessly about the room. Presently he came to a large mirror. He halted, swaying and hiccoughing. Then reason dawned. "By Jove, hic—by Jove! A blasted bird—ha!—by Jove!" I wonder if it was Scott's society that induced the prim Rogers to indulge in so riotous and Herodotean an anecdote.

There are a few more occasional reminiscences of Scott that Rogers' retentive memory has kept for us:—

"I introduced Sir Walter Scott to Madame D'Arblay, having taken him with me to her house. She had not heard that he was lame; and when he limped towards a chair, she said, 'Dear me, Sir Walter, I hope you have not met with an accident?' He answered, 'An accident, madam, nearly as old as my birth.'

"At the time when Scott and Byron were the two *lions* of London, Hookham Frere observed, 'Great poets formerly (Homer and Milton) were blind; now they are lame.'

"One forenoon Scott was sitting for his bust to Chantrey, who was quite in despair at the dull and heavy expression of his countenance. Suddenly Fuller ('Jack Fuller,' the then buffoon of the House of Commons) was announced by

a servant; and, as suddenly, Scott's face was lighted up to that pitch of animation which the sculptor desired, and that he made all haste to avail himself of.

"After dining at my house, Sir Walter (then Mr.) Scott accompanied me to a party given by Lady Jersey. We met Sheridan there, who put the question to Scott in express terms, 'Pray, Mr. Scott, did you, or did you not, write *Waverley?*' Scott replied, '*On my honour*, I did not.' Now, though Scott may perhaps be justified for returning an answer in the negative, I cannot think that he is to be excused for strengthening it with 'on my honour.'

"There is a very pleasing spirit of kindness in Scott's *Life of Swift* and *Lives of the Novelists;* he endeavours to place everybody's actions in the most favourable light.

"As a *story*, his *Lady of the Lake* is delightful."

In his estimate of Scott's poetry, Rogers is more in accordance with modern criticism; but scarcely for the same reasons.

"On the whole, his *poetry* is too carelessly written to suit my taste; but parts of it are very happy; these lines of *Marmion*, for instance—

> 'To seize the moment Marmion tried,
> And whisper'd to the king aside:
> "Oh, let such tears unwonted plead
> For respite short from dubious deed!
> A child will weep a bramble's smart,
> A maid to see her sparrow part,
> A stripling for a woman's heart:
> But woe awaits a country when
> She sees the tears of bearded men.
> Then, oh, what omen, dark and high,
> When Douglas wets his manly eye?"'[1]

[1] Canto V. xvi.

and the still better passage in the same poem—

> 'O woman! in our hours of ease,
> Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
> And variable as the shade
> By the light quivering aspen made;
> When pain and anguish wring the brow,
> A ministering angel thou!'"[1]

On the other hand Rogers' opinion of the novels was not very enlightened. He said that he thought he'd have rather written Manzoni's *Promezzi Sposi* than all Scott's novels—a singular instance of poor taste; but the wordy, natural genius of Scott was rather beyond Rogers' appreciation. He regarded the novels, I think, as scarcely "adult" literature.

Rogers once gave a dinner at which Scott and Sheridan were both present; and Tommy Moore. An incident occurred which serves to commemorate the name of a woman, who is the heroine of one perfect story, which must be quoted:—

"Sheridan was talking," said Rogers, "in his very best style, when, to my great vexation, Moore (who had that sort of restlessness which never allows him to be happy where he is) suddenly interrupted Sheridan by exclaiming, 'Isn't it time to go to Lydia White's?'" Dyce adds the following note:—

"Miss Lydia White (long since dead) was a lady who delighted in giving parties to as many celebrated people as she could collect. The following instance of her readiness in reply was communicated to me by my friend the Rev. W. Harness. 'At one of Lydia White's small and most agreeable dinners in Park Street, the company (most of

[1] Canto VI. xxx.

them, except the hostess, being Whigs) were discussing in rather a querulous strain the desperate prospects of their party. "Yes," said Sydney Smith, "we are in a most deplorable condition; we must do something to help ourselves; I think we had better sacrifice a Tory virgin." This was pointedly addressed to Lydia White, who at once catching and applying the allusion to Iphigenia, answered, "I believe there is nothing the Whigs would not do *to raise the wind*." '"

I hope when that story is quoted in future, Miss Lydia White's name will not fail to be connected with it.

Robert Southey, who is connected with the Lake Poets, by reasons quite apart from his small talent as a poet, was an acquaintance of Rogers; and applied to him occasionally for services to be rendered. He introduced to Rogers a minor poet, Herbert Knowles, in whom Southey found traces of Lord Byron's genius. The poem "was brimful of genius"; "it was crude, exuberant, and ill-planned, had it not been so, I should have thought it far less hopeful"—a surprisingly sensible verdict for Southey. In an extremely characteristic passage Southey tells Rogers: "If Lord Byron had been in England, I would have asked you to have applied to him. Amid all that storm and tumult of unhappy passions, and more unhappy opinions, there must be good and generous feelings; it is wholesome for him that they be exercised, and proud as he is, it might gratify him to have them acknowledged and appealed to by one who condemns and pities him as I do." What a mixture of the auctioneer's advertisement, and the sober divine moral warning! "All that storm, etc."—as if Byron were a kind of bundle of infernal feelings, dehumanized, Titanic. No wonder he laughed at Southey, if he ever heard similar verdicts repeated to him by common acquaintances.

Rogers felt himself once in a delicate situation because of his friendship with Byron. When *Human Life* was slowly approaching publication, news came that quite another presentation of human life—*Don Juan*—was to be issued. Now in *Human Life* were half-a-dozen lines for Byron :—

"Young B—— in the groves of Academe,
Or where Ilyssus winds his whispering stream;
Or where the wild bees swarm with ceaseless hum,
Dreaming old dreams,—a joy for years to come;
Or on the Rock within the sacred Fane;—
Scenes such as Milton sought, but sought in vain."

In the Dedication to *Don Juan* was a reference to Rogers, and alas! for the peace of that amiable man, bitter remarks about others. So Rogers hastens to publish his panegyric "before the gall and wormwood in the Dedication appear."

We all know what that gall and wormwood was, although its publication was delayed until after Byron's death.

"Bob Southey! You're a Poet—Poet-Laureate,
And representative of all the race;
Although 'tis true that you turned out a Tory at
Last—yours has lately been a common case;
And now, my Epic Renegade! what are ye at?
With all the Lakers in and out of place?
A nest of tuneful persons to my eye
Like 'four and twenty Blackbirds in a pye.'

'Which pye being opened they began to sing'
(This old song and new simile holds good)
'A dainty dish to set before the King,'
Or Regent, who admires such kind of food;—

And Coleridge too has lately taken wing,
But like a hawk incumbered with his hood,—
Explaining metaphysics to the nation—
I wish he would explain his Explanation.

You, Bob! are rather insolent, you know,
At being disappointed in your wish
To supersede all warblers here below,
And be the only Blackbird in the dish;
And then you overstrain yourself, or so,
And tumble downward like the flying fish
Gasping on deck, because you soar too high, Bob,
And fall, for lack of moisture quite a-dry, Bob!

You—Gentlemen! by dint of long seclusion
From better company, have kept your own
At Keswick, and, through still continued fusion
Of one another's minds, at last have grown
To deem as a most logical conclusion,
That Poesy has wreaths for you alone:
There is a narrowness in such a notion,
Which makes me wish you'd change your lakes for ocean.

Your bays may hide the baldness of your brows—
Perhaps some virtuous blushes;—let them go—
To you I envy neither fruit nor boughs—
And for the fame you would engross below,
The field is universal, and allows
Scope to all such as feel the inherent glow;
Scott, Rogers, Campbell, Moore and Crabbe will try
'Gainst you the question with posterity."

Gall and wormwood enough! And no doubt Southey was natural in his anger; but the manner of his anger it is difficult for us to forgive. Who can remember, save with a surprised shame, those fearful words of his about

Byron: "I have fastened his name upon the gibbet, for reproach and ignominy, as long as it shall endure. Take it down who can!" What an impotent aping of omnipotence is here. No wonder Byron said in his *Vision of Judgment* that Southey anticipated, by intuition, the Divine decisions.

After all Wordsworth was just as severely handled by Byron, and how did Wordsworth respond? Publicly, not at all; and in private this is how he writes to Rogers:—

"I saw Southey the other day; he was well, and busy as usual, and as his late letter shows, not quite so charitably disposed to *Don Juan* deceased as you evidently are, if I may judge by a tribute to his memory bearing your name, which I accidentally met with in a newspaper; but *you* were the Don's particular friend, an equal indulgence, therefore, could not be expected from the Laureate, who, I will not say was his particular enemy, but who had certainly no friendship for him. Medwin makes a despicable figure as the salesman of so much trash. I do not believe there is a man living, from a shoeblack at the corner of your street up to the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Lord Chancellor, of whose conversation so much worthless matter could be reported, with so little deserving to be remembered, as the result of an equal number of miscellaneous opportunities. Is this the fault of Lord B. or his Boswell? The truth is, I fear, that it may be pretty equally divided between them.

"My amanuensis, Mrs. W., says that it is not handsome in me to speak thus of your friend—no more it is, if he were your friend *mortuus* in every sense of the word, but his spirit walks abroad, to do some good I hope, but a plaguy deal of mischief."

Medwin was a noser after ill-savouring gossip who pub-

lished *Conversations with Byron*, in which no doubt there was a great deal of veracious reporting, and precious little of true portraiture. To-day Wordsworth's letter may seem ungenerous; but when we compare it with Southey's shriek of rage, his unclean pious gloating over Byron's sins, and also remember how Byron treated Wordsworth's poetry, I do not think it can be blamed as altogether unfair.

Well, poor Herbert Knowles died at the age of nineteen; his one book, in spite of Southey's praise, contains no really good verses; and it is difficult to discern in it even a promise of genuine poetry.

Another young poet, not quite so forgotten as Knowles, whom Rogers was asked to help (by Henry Mackenzie), was Robert Pollok, author of the *Course of Time*. That terrible and prosaic book still lingers in corners with the works of Mr. Martin Tupper, in libraries where L. E. L. takes the place of Byron. No book less deserved reading or praise, yet Christopher North could say it overflowed with poetry; and Mackenzie said it was "in point of genius and poetical power a very wonderful one." We have one contemporary record which puts its right value on the *Course of Time*, and also serves as a very fair specimen of the manner of the blank verse:—

> "Robert Pollok, A.M., this work of yours
> Is meant, I do not doubt, extremely well,
> And the design I deem most laudable;
> But since I find the book laid on my table,
> I shall presume (with the fair owner's leave)
> To note a single slight deficiency:
> I mean in short (since it is called a poem),
> That in the course of ten successive books
> If something in the shape of poetry
> Were to be met with, we should like it better;

But nothing of the kind is to be found,
Nothing alas! but words of the olden time,
Quaint and uncouth, contorted phrase and queer
With the familiar language that befits
Tea-drinking parties most unmeetly matched."

So wrote Frere, and I hope the fair owner appreciated it. As readers of this book may not be as familiar with Pollok as they should be, I append a passage for comparison :—

"The Theatre was, from the very first,
The favourite haunt of sin, though honest men—
Some very honest, wise and worthy men—
Maintained it might be turned to good account;
And so perhaps it might, but never was.
From first to last it was an evil place:
And now such things were acted there as made
The devils blush, and from the neighbourhood
Angels and holy men, trembling retired."

Any one who wishes to continue this may consult the Sixth Book of Robert Pollok's "Poem."

CHAPTER IX

BYRON

THE friendship between Byron and Rogers arose in a characteristic way. Moore, who was already a friend of Rogers, was aggrieved by a passage in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,* published in 1809. "Thomas Little" did not, I expect, much mind the early passage commenting on his muse :—

> "Who in soft guise, surrounded by a choir
> Of virgins melting, not to Vesta's fire,
> With sparkling eyes, and cheek by passion flush'd,
> Strikes his wild lyre, whilst listening dames are hush'd?
> 'Tis Little! young Catullus of his day,
> As sweet, but as immoral, in his lay!
> Grieved to condemn, the muse must still be just,
> Nor spare melodious advocates of lust.
> Pure is the flame which o'er her altar burns;
> From grosser incense with disgust she turns:
> Yet kind to youth, this expiation o'er,
> She bids thee 'mend thy line and sin no more.'"

But he could not brook the four stinging lines with their even more insolent note :—

> "Can none remember that eventful day,
> That ever-glorious, almost fatal fray,
> When Little's leadless pistol met his eye,
> And Bow-street myrmidons stood laughing by?"

"In 1806 Messrs Jeffrey and Moore met at Chalk Farm. The duel was prevented by the interference of the magistracy; and, on examination, the balls of the pistols were found to have evaporated. This incident gave occasion to much waggery in the public prints." This was a slur not only on his courage, but on his truthfulness, for had he not himself told the world the story of that famous duel? Here is a *résumé* of his own account of the affair:—

"And then was it that, for the first time my excellent friend Jeffrey and I met face to face. He was standing with the bag, which contained the pistols, in his hand, while Horner was looking anxiously around.

"We, of course, had bowed to each other on meeting; but the first words I recollect to have passed between us was Jeffrey's saying, on our being left together, 'What a beautiful morning it is!' 'Yes,' I answered, with a slight smile, 'a morning made for better purposes;' to which his only response was a sort of assenting sigh. As our assistants were not, any more than ourselves, very expert at warlike matters, they were rather slow in their proceedings; and as Jeffrey and I walked up and down together, we came once in sight of their operations: upon which I related to him, as rather *a propos* to the purpose, what Billy Egan, the Irish barrister, once said when, as he was sauntering about in like manner while the pistols were loading, his antagonist, a fiery little fellow, called out to him angrily to keep his ground. 'Don't make yourself unaisy, my dear fellow,' said Egan; 'sure isn't it bad enough to take the dose, without being by at the mixing up?'

"Jeffrey had scarcely time to smile at this story, when our two friends, issuing from behind the trees, placed us at our respective posts (the distance, I suppose, having

BYRON

FROM AN ENGRAVING BY HENRY LINTON, AFTER THE PICTURE BY HARLOW

been previously measured by them), and put the pistols into our hands. Then they retired a little distance; the pistols were on both sides raised; and we waited but the signal to fire, when some police-officers, whose approach none of us had noticed, and who were within a second of being too late, rushed out from a hedge behind Jeffrey; and one of them, striking at Jeffrey's pistol with his staff, knocked it to some distance into the field, while another, running over to me, took possession also of mine. We were then replaced in our respective carriages, and conveyed, crestfallen, to Bow Street."

The story about the bullets arose from some mistake of the magistrate, who thought he found Moore's pistol loaded, and Jeffrey's empty. However this was acknowledged to be an error; and the end of the duel was "waggery in the public prints" and a firm friendship between the poet and his critic.

Moore, though he can scarcely have desired another duel, sent Byron an unfriendly letter; which did not reach its object, as Byron was out of England. When he returned in 1811, sense had supervened, and Moore asked Rogers to give him an opportunity of meeting Byron. Hence the famous dinner-party, of which Rogers left so inimitable an account:—

"Neither Moore nor myself had ever seen Byron when it was settled that he should dine at my house to meet Moore; nor was he known by sight to Campbell, who, happening to call upon me that morning, consented to join the party. I thought it best that I alone should be in the drawing-room when Byron entered it; and Moore and Campbell accordingly withdrew. Soon after his arrival, they returned; and I introduced them to him severally, naming them as Adam named the beasts. When we sat

down to dinner, I asked Byron if he would take soup? 'No; he never took soup.'—Would he take some fish? 'No, he never took fish.'—Presently I asked if he would eat some mutton? 'No; he never ate mutton.'—I then asked if he would take a glass of wine? 'No; he never tasted wine.'—It was now necessary to inquire what he *did* eat and drink; and the answer was, 'Nothing but hard biscuits and soda-water.' Unfortunately, neither hard biscuits nor soda-water were at hand; and he dined upon potatoes bruised down on his plate and drenched with vinegar. My guests stayed till very late, discussing the merits of Walter Scott and Joanna Baillie. Some days after, meeting Hobhouse, I said to him, 'How long will Lord Byron persevere in his present diet?' He replied, 'Just as long as you continue to notice it.' I did not then know, what I now know, to be a fact—that Byron, after leaving my house, had gone to a club in St. James's Street and eaten a hearty meat-supper."

From this time Byron saw more of Rogers perhaps than of any man in London; until the exile, after the quarrel with Lady Byron. It must be remembered that Rogers' recollections of Byron in London at this time were not reported till years afterwards; and that the memory of those happy days, for surely in spite of Byron's difficult, shy temperament they were happy, was somewhat shadowed by the less pleasant meeting in Italy, five and a half years after the exile of 1816. No one who reads the letters of Byron to Rogers in the earlier period can doubt the sincerity of Byron's attachment to the "Bard, Beau and Banker"; and Medwin's insolently foolish suggestion that he valued Rogers' dinners and tolerated his companionship for the sake of a good meal, is only useful as giving a glimpse of the worm-like nature of the man who imagined it. Byron

was undoubtedly glad to be on intimate terms with a poet for whose work he had a great admiration—he preferred *Jacqueline* to his own *Lara*—and with a man in society about whom he had no need to suspect, as he suspected of Moore, that "Tommy dearly loves a Duke." Nor do I doubt that Rogers had an affection for Byron. No one ever denied Byron's fascination; and Rogers was sufficiently old, sufficiently feminine to be more peculiarly susceptible to the flattering homage of this ardent, god-like, youthful genius. And his recollection of those five years in London might have been different had he put them down, when the intimacy was still fresh—before he had seen the Byron of Italy, disappointed, angry, contemptuous, and looking, craving for the sympathy that he found nowhere completely save in his sister.

The recollections are mainly of external things:—

"Byron had prodigious facility of composition. He was fond of suppers; and used often to sup at my house and eat heartily (for he had then given up the hard biscuit and soda-water diet); after going home, he would throw off sixty or eighty verses, which he would send to press next morning.

"He one evening took me to the green-rooms of Drury Lane Theatre, where I was much entertained. When the play began, I went round to the front of the house, and desired the box-keeper to show me into Lord Byron's box. I had been there about a minute, thinking myself quite alone, when suddenly Byron and Miss Boyce (the actress) emerged from a dark corner.

"In those days at least, Byron had no readiness of reply in conversation. If you happened to let fall any observation which offended him, he would say nothing at the time; but the offence would lie rankling in his mind;

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and perhaps a fortnight after, he would suddenly come out with some very cutting remarks upon you, giving them as his deliberate opinions, the results of his experience of your character.

"Several women were in love with Byron, but none so violently as Lady Caroline Lamb. She absolutely besieged him. He showed me the first letter he received from her; in which she assured him that, if he was in any want of money, 'all her jewels were at his service.' They frequently had quarrels; and more than once, on coming home, I have found Lady C. walking in the garden, and waiting for me, to beg that I would reconcile them. When she met Byron at a party, she would always, if possible, return home from it in *his* carriage, and accompanied by *him:* I recollect particularly their returning to town together from Holland House.—But such was the insanity of her passion for Byron, that, sometimes, when not invited to a party where he was to be, she would wait for him in the street till it was over! One night, after a great party at Devonshire House, to which Lady Caroline had not been invited, I saw her,—yes, saw her—talking to Byron, with half of her body thrust into the carriage which he had just entered. In spite of all this absurdity, my firm belief is that there was nothing criminal between them.

"Byron at last was sick of her. When their intimacy was at an end, and while she was living in the country, she burned, very solemnly, on a sort of funeral pile, *transcripts* of all the letters which she had received from Byron, and *a copy* of a miniature (his portrait) which he had presented to her; several girls from the neighbourhood, whom she had dressed in white garments, dancing round the pile, and singing a song which she had written for the occasion,

'Burn, fire, burn,' &c. She was mad; and her family allowed her to do whatever she chose.

"Latterly, I believe, Byron never dined with Lady B.; for it was one of his fancies (or affectations) that 'he could not endure to see women eat.' I recollect that he once refused to meet Madame de Staël at my house *at dinner*, but came in the evening; and when I have asked him to dinner without mentioning what company I was to have, he would write me a note to inquire 'if I had invited any women.'

"Wilkes' daughter may have had a right to burn her father's *Memoirs;* but Moore, I conceive, was not justified in giving his consent to the burning of Byron's: when Byron told him that he might 'do whatever he pleased with them,' Byron certainly never contemplated their being burned. If Moore had made me his confidant in the business, I should have protested warmly against the destruction of the *Memoirs;* but he chose Luttrell, probably because he thought him the more fashionable man; and Luttrell, who cared nothing about the matter, readily voted that they should be put into the fire. There were, I understand, some gross things in that manuscript; but I read only a portion of it, and did not light upon them. I remember that it contained this anecdote: On his marriage-night, Byron suddenly started out of his first sleep: a taper, which burned in the room, was casting a ruddy glare through the crimson curtains of the bed; and he could not help exclaiming, in a voice so loud that he wakened Lady B., 'Good God, I am surely in hell!'"

Of the nature of Byron's genius Rogers had little idea. He thought not much more of *Childe Harold* than did his "well-read" friend Tom Grenville; and the later poems, in particularly the satirical poems and *Don Juan*, in which

Byron really found himself, he was not capable of appreciating. The reason for this I have hinted at in the account of Southey. All Byron's contemporaries were led astray by undue stress on the accidental occasion of so much of his verse: how could they properly appreciate the sometimes cruel, sometimes good-humoured, but always mocking satire on their friends and acquaintances. This is how in the *Vision of Judgment* Byron writes of the grave Southey:—

LXXXV

"At length with jostling, elbowing, and the aid
Of cherubim appointed to that post,
The devil Asmodeus to the circle made
His way, and look'd as if his journey cost
Some trouble. When his burden down he laid,
'What's this?' cried Michael; 'why, 'tis not a ghost?'
'I know it,' quoth the incubus; 'but he
Shall be one, if you leave the affair to me.'

XC

Now the bard, glad to get an audience, which
By no means often was his case below,
Began to cough, and hawk, and hem, and pitch
His voice into that awful note of woe
To all unhappy hearers within reach
Of poets when the tide of rhyme's in flow;
But stuck fast with his first hexameter,
Not one of all whose gouty feet would stir.

XCI

But ere the spavin'd dactyls could be spurr'd
Into recitative, in great dismay
Both cherubim and seraphim were heard
To murmur loudly through their long array;

And Michael rose ere he could get a word
Of all his founder'd verses under way,
And cried, 'For God's sake stop, my friend! 'twere best—
Non Di, non homines—you know the rest.'

XCII

A general bustle spread throughout the throng,
Which seem'd to hold all verse in detestation;
The angels had of course enough of song
When upon service; and the generation
Of ghosts had heard too much in life, not long
Before, to profit by a new occasion:
The monarch, mute till then, exclaim'd, 'What, what!
Pye come again? No more—no more of that!'

XCIV

The varlet was not an ill-favour'd knave;
A good deal like a vulture in the face,
With a hook nose and a hawk's eye, which gave
A smart and sharper-looking sort of grace
To his whole aspect, which, though rather grave,
Was by no means so ugly as his case;
But that, indeed, was hopeless as can be,
Quite a poetic felony '*de se*.'

XCIX

He had written Wesley's life, here turning round
To Satan, 'Sir, I'm ready to write yours,
In two octavo volumes, nicely bound,
With notes and preface, all that most allures
The pious purchaser; and there's no ground
For fear, for I can choose my own reviewers:
So let me have the proper documents,
That I may add you to my other saints.'

C

Satan bowed, and was silent. 'Well, if you,
With amiable modesty, decline
My offer, what says Michael? There are few
Whose memoirs could be render'd more divine.
Mine is a pen of all work; not so new
As it was once, but I would make you shine
Like your own trumpet. By the way, my own
Has more of brass in it, and is as well blown.

CI

'But talking about trumpets, here's my Vision!
Now you shall judge, all people; yes, you shall
Judge with my judgment, and by my decision
Be guided who shall enter heaven or fall.
I settle all these things by intuition,
Times present, past, to come, heaven, hell, and all,
Like King Alfonso. When I thus see double,
I save the Deity some worlds of trouble.'

CII

He ceased, and drew forth an MS.; and no
Persuasion on the part of devils, saints,
Or angels, now could stop the torrent; so
He read the first three lines of the contents;
But at the fourth, the whole spiritual show
Had vanish'd, with variety of scents,
Ambrosial and sulphureous, as they sprang,
Like lightning, off from his 'melodious twang.'

CIII

Those grand heroics acted as a spell:
The angels stopp'd their ears and plied their pinions;
The devils ran howling, deafen'd, down to hell;
The ghosts fled, gibbering, for their own dominions—

(For 'tis not yet decided where they dwell,
And I leave every man to his opinions);
Michael took refuge in his trump—but, lo!
His teeth were set on edge, he could not blow!"

We must not blame Rogers if we find him incapable of gauging the real value of such satire as this. It is one of the penalties of the satirist, if his work is to be at all personal, vivid and real, that he should offend. And the poet who offends people's susceptibilities, can hardly expect to earn the praise of their friends. How awkward it is to have to consider your visiting list to avoid asking any two people together. It is evident that in the society where Rogers moved, love for Art had to give way before the social amenities. Nor could people in general—though in this Rogers was an exception—avoid confusing Byron's poems with his life, and his life with his stories about it.

Then, again, while I hope and believe that had Byron continued in England, Rogers would have continued his champion and friend, the task was made more difficult for him by the poet's departure in 1816. Like Scott, and like most of the men of letters, Rogers was emphatically on Byron's side. His first, unpardonable mistake was to marry the woman he did. After marriage, everything goes to show that the innumerable difficulties that arose were at least as much her fault as her husband's; and for the foul and scandalous stories subsequently circulated by her, and at her instigation, stories that could only have occurred to a "good" woman, it is difficult to forgive her or her allies. In such a matter I would give the opinion of Sir Walter Scott weight over half a ton of crapulous gossip —and we know what Scott thought. "I am sure," he wrote to Rogers, "that you will join with me in severely regretting this unlucky business of Lord Byron's. Who

would have expected such a consummation last year when I was in town? It is an unlucky business, since it gives stupidity a momentary triumph over genius—and talents."

Byron held a far higher opinion of Rogers' merits as a poet than he deserved. Perpetually he is citing the old *Pleasures of Memory* against the modern innovators. I think at times that Byron "protests too much," and is seeking to convince himself against his will of the merits of the older school. It is noteworthy that in his latest references to English poetry he ignores Rogers and has a good word for the despised Keats, though nothing for Shelley. In earlier days (in 1813) we have him putting first Scott "'the Monarch of Parnassus, and the most English of Bards'; 'Rogers next in the living list (I value him more as the last of the *best* school); Moore and Campbell both *third;* Southey and Wordsworth and Coleridge'—and below these, οἱ πολλοὶ." Keats had, at this time, of course written nothing; but I doubt if Byron would have included him. But how comes it that in *Don Juan* (Canto XI.), while we have Scott, Moore, Campbell, Southey, Wordsworth, Coleridge all referred to, there is no reference to Rogers.

LIV

"However, he did pretty well, and was
Admitted as an aspirant to all
The coteries, and, as in Banquo's glass,
At great assemblies or in parties small,
He saw ten thousand living authors pass,
That being about their average numeral;
Also the eighty 'greatest living poets,'
As every paltry magazine can show *it's*.

LV

In twice five years the 'greatest living poet,'
Like to the champion in the fisty ring,
Is call'd on to support his claim, or show it,
Although 'tis an imaginary thing.
Even I—albeit I'm sure I did not know it,
Nor sought of foolscap subjects to be king,—
Was reckon'd, a considerable time,
The grand Napoleon of the realms of rhyme.

LVI

But Juan was my Moscow, and Faliero
My Leipsic, and my Mont Saint Jean seems Cain:
'La Belle Alliance' of dunces down at zero,
Now that the Lion's fall'n, may rise again:
But I will fall at least as fell my hero;
Nor reign at all, or as a *monarch* reign;
Or to some lonely isle of gaolers go,
With turncoat Southey for my turnkey Lowe.

LVII

Sir Walter reign'd before me; Moore and Campbell
Before and after: but now grown more holy,
The Muses upon Sion's hill must ramble
With poets almost clergymen, or wholly:
And Pegasus has a psalmodic amble
Beneath the very Reverend Rowley Powley,
Who shoes the glorious animal with stilts,
A modern Ancient Pistol—by the hilts!

LVIII

Still he excels that artificial bard
Labourer in the same vineyard, though the vine
Yields him but vinegar for his reward,—
That neutralised dull Dorus of the Nine;

That swarthy Sporus, neither man nor bard;
That ox of verse, who *ploughs* for every line:—
Cambyses' roaring Romans beat at last
The howling Hebrews of Cybele's priest.—

LIX

Then there's my gentle Euphues; who, they say,
Sets up for being a sort of *moral me;*
He'll find it rather difficult some day
To turn out both, or either, it may be.
Some persons think that Coleridge hath the sway;
And Wordsworth hath supporters, two or three;
And that deep-mouth'd Bœotian 'Savage Landor'
Has taken for a swan rogue Southey's gander.

LX

John Keats, who was kill'd off by one critique,
Just as he really promised something great,
If not intelligible, without Greek
Contrived to talk about the Gods of late,
Much as they might have been supposed to speak.
Poor fellow! His was an untoward fate;
'Tis strange the mind, that fiery particle,
Should let itself be snuff'd out by an article."

Surely we should have expected something about Rogers as one "who reign'd before me." I cannot believe that Byron was influenced at all by the meeting at Pisa; for the quarrels there were only the chafings of a sensitive nature. I think that it is possible that he felt at last that the future and, in a way, the truth of poetry was with the innovators. It seems almost impossible that his active brain could have gone so long using the most modern of methods and still paying homage at the most lifeless and

dustiest of shrines. I like to think that he did, in his heart, give a little justice to the new gods, before he died.

That Byron was himself a leader, by his practice, of the romantic and modernist movement, there is no need to show elaborately. I am not forgetting that as an artist his influence and his achievement is not comparable with the influence and achievement of Coleridge, or Wordsworth or Keats or Shelley—nay scarcely with the influence of Leigh Hunt: that is, if we detach Byron's verse from his life and his times and regard it, as far as possible, *in vacuo*. But in another way, from the historical standpoint, Byron's forced allegiance to the new spirit is more significant, more important than the work of all the other poets of his age. The power of his genius demanded new forms and new methods, and against his convictions, his Muse—as he would have said—compelled him to employ them. And we must not neglect to give him his due honour because other poets have since filled his metres with a stronger and a more wonderful music. His affected contempt for his art was by no means all affectation; and though he could probably never have written carefully and perfectly, I believe that his carelessness and his imperfections were intensified by the kind of indifference he felt about writing. Byron only wrote for two reasons—if indeed the two be not one—he wrote to preach, as in *Cain*, or *Manfred*, or *Don Juan;* and he wrote because certain passions demanded immediate expression. Never was there a more foolish gibe than Curran's taunt at Byron's *Farewell:* "I protest I do not understand this kind of whimpering; here is a man who first weeps over his wife, and then wipes his eyes with the public." There was no *public* for Byron: the lawyer-mind of Curran can't understand a man expressing his emotions except before an audience, but

Byron had nothing of this in him. He knew friends and enemies ; but no " public." And in that is the secret both of his life and of his poetry. He wanted sympathy, and he challenged hatred ; but he never postured before a judge or a jury, other than his own soul. And what son of man dare accuse him of posturing before that ? Whether he did or did not it is not ours to say.

And, anyway, we have his poems. He could write as simply as in the familiar

" When we two parted
In silence and tears,
Half broken-hearted
To sever for years,
Pale grew thy cheek and cold,
Colder thy kiss ;
Truly that hour foretold
Sorrow to this.

The dew of the morning
Sunk chill on my brow—
It felt like the warning
Of what I feel now.
Thy vows all are broken,
And light is thy fame :
I hear thy name spoken,
And share in its shame.

In secret we met—
In silence I grieve,
That thy heart could forget,
Thy spirit deceive.
If I should meet thee
After long years,
How should I greet thee ?—
With silence and tears."

The third verse, with its weak "knell to mine ear," is best omitted; then the poem is about as near perfection as Byron ever got, and in metrical skill and in sheer directness he never excelled it.

And it is shallow criticism that refuses to recognize the charm in the lines to his sister, written in the metre which Mr. Swinburne afterwards adopted and improved:—

"Though human, thou didst not deceive me,
Though woman, thou didst not forsake,
Though loved, thou forborest to grieve me,
Though slander'd, thou never couldst shake;
Though trusted, thou didst not disclaim me,
Though parted, it was not to fly,
Though watchful, 'twas not to defame me,
Nor, mute, that the world might belie.

Yet I blame not the world, nor despise it,
Nor the war of the many with one;
If my soul was not fitted to prize it,
'Twas folly not sooner to shun:
And if dearly that error hath cost me,
And more than I once could foresee,
I have found that, whatever it lost me,
It could not deprive me of *thee*.

From the wreck of the past, which hath perish'd,
This much I at least may recall,
It hath taught me that what I most cherish'd
Deserved to be dearest of all:
In the desert a fountain is springing,
In the wide waste there still is a tree;
And a bird in the solitude singing,
Which speaks to my spirit of thee."

Still we must admit that in the lyrical poems Byron has been and probably will be not infrequently excelled; he

has too much of the rhetorician in his nature to produce the pure lyric ; but I see no chance as yet of any one disputing his empery over that realm of satiric epic, of which *Don Juan* is the great example. Heine is the only other poet who approaches to that singular fusion of poetry and cynicism, that mixture of fun, and folly, and filth and truth which combine to make *Don Juan* the most universal European book since Rabelais. And, after all, the dirt in *Don Juan* has been greatly exaggerated ; it is not aggressive except in one or two passages, and the fun and the folly and the truth are nearly always there. And is it not here that the great and abiding value of Byron lies ? He did speak the truth ; he did hate humbug. There is a suspicion of humbug about Wordsworth, and more than a suspicion about Southey ; Coleridge is too immaterial, Keats too much occupied with the æsthetic, Shelley too full of a certain aimless rebellion—for any one of them to be effective truth-tellers to a mundane age. Byron, to adopt Arnold's famous image, did say, and say vehemently to the world of his day, " thou ailest here and there " ; he may not have chosen the same ailments as did Goethe ; but his diagnosis was quite as sound, and his remedy, truth, is not such a bad one. He may be dealing with manners such as the custom of preparing your conversation : how his ridicule pricks the quaint self-sufficiency of the " conversation-clubs " and parties.

" But what we can we glean in this vile age
Of chaff, although our gleanings be not grist.
I must not quite omit the talking sage,
Kit-Cat, the famous Conversationist,
Who, in his common-place book, had a page
Prepared each morn for evenings. ' List, oh list ! '

'Alas, poor ghost!'—What unexpected woes
Await those who have studied their bons-mots!

Firstly, they must allure the conversation
By many windings to their clever clinch;
And secondly, must let slip no occasion,
Nor *bate* (abate) their hearers of an *inch*,
But take an ell—and make a great sensation,
If possible; and thirdly, never flinch
When some smart talker puts them to the test,
But seize the last word, which no doubt's the best."

Or he may be tilting at the political and international situation; and here again, though his politics are not unmixed with party, they are freer than those of any other poet of his time, save Shelley, who only had panti-socratic principles.

"O Wilberforce! thou man of black renown,
Whose merit none enough can sing or say,
Thou hast struck one immense Colossus down,
Thou moral Washington of Africa!
But there's another little thing, I own,
Which you should perpetrate some summer's day,
And set the other half of earth to rights;
You have *freed* the blacks—now pray shut up the whites.

Shut up the bald-coot bully Alexander!
Ship off the Holy Three to Senegal;
Teach them that 'sauce for goose is sauce for gander,'
And ask them how *they* like to be in thrall?
Shut up each high heroic salamander,
Who eats fire gratis (since the pay's but small);
Shut up—no, *not* the King, but the Pavilion,
Or else 'twill cost us all another million.

Shut up the world at large, let Bedlam out;
And you will be perhaps surprised to find
All things pursue exactly the same route,
As now with those of *soi-disant* sound mind.
This I could prove beyond a single doubt,
Were there a jot of sense among mankind;
But till that *point d'appui* is found, alas!
Like Archimedes, I leave earth as 'twas."

When we consider the circumstances of composition, the exuberance, the high spirits, the humour of *Don Juan* are enormously to Byron's credit. It can't be called, in spite of all its scolding, an ill-tempered book. The poet is too pleased with his drubbings to cherish any real animosity against the drubbed; he keeps his hatred for their offences. I have probably quoted enough from a poem that all should know; but it is astonishing how ignorant the present generation is of the vivid violence of *Don Juan*—the only thing the English literature has to show that can be mentioned in the same breath as Aristophanes. Yet I have met Londoners, well-read Londoners, who knew nothing of this passage, save the last two lines :—

"What a delightful thing's a turnpike road!
So smooth, so level, such a mode of shaving
The earth, as scarce the eagle in the broad
Air can accomplish, with his wide wings waving.
Had such been cut in Phaeton's time, the god
Had told his son to satisfy his craving
With the York mail;—but onward as we roll,
'Surgit amari aliquid'—the toll!

. . . . . .

Juan now was borne,
Just as the day began to wane and darken,
O'er the high hill, which looks with pride or scorn

Toward the great city—Ye who have a spark in
  Your veins of Cockney spirit, smile or mourn
According as you take things well or ill;
Bold Britons, we are now on Shooter's Hill.

The sun went down, the smoke rose up, as from
  A half-unquench'd volcano, o'er a space
Which well beseem'd the 'Devil's drawing-room,'
  As some have qualified that wondrous place:
But Juan felt, though not approaching *home*,
  As one who, though he were not of the race,
Revered the soil, of those true sons the mother,
Who butcher'd half the earth, and bullied t'other.

A mighty mass of brick, and smoke, and shipping,
  Dirty and dusky, but as wide as eye
Could reach, with here and there a sail just skipping
  In sight, then lost amidst the forestry
Of masts; a wilderness of steeples peeping
  On tiptoe through their sea coal canopy;
A huge, dun cupola, like a foolscap crown
On a fool's head—and there is London Town!"

For this new world of poetry in Byron's satiric writings, Rogers had no perception. He told Dyce that the best passage Byron ever wrote was that on Solitude in *Childe Harold*, stanzas that have not a spark of the individual fire that burns, say, in *Beppo* or the *Vision of Judgement*, let alone *Don Juan*.

There is no doubt that the meeting between the two friends in Italy was somewhat of a disappointment for both; but there is no evidence to show that Rogers bore any malice for the rather off-hand, difficult behaviour of Byron. I think that it is quite possible that Byron had hoped to find in Rogers one to whom he could really appeal

for sympathy; but found that the little man was too occupied with his London life and society to risk losing anything by sympathy that might be misunderstood, or comments on friends that might be misrepresented. Rogers' later recollections of the visit are worth transcribing:—

"My latest intercourse with Byron was in Italy. We travelled some time together; and, if there was any scenery particularly well worth seeing, he generally contrived that we should pass through it in the dark.

"As we were crossing the Apennines, he told me that he had left an order in his will that Allegra, the child who soon after died, his daughter by Miss C., should never be taught the English language.—You know that Allegra was buried at Harrow; but probably you have not heard that the body was sent over to England in *two* packages, that no one might suspect what it was.

"About the same time he said,—being at last assured that the celebrated critique on his early poems by the *Edinburgh Review* was written by Lord Brougham,—'If ever I return to England, Brougham shall hear from me.' He added, 'That critique cost me three bottles of claret' (to raise his spirits after reading it).

"One day, during dinner, at Pisa, when Shelley and Trelawney were with us, Byron chose to run down Shakespeare (for whom he, like Sheridan,[1] either had, or pretended to have, little admiration). I said nothing. But Shelley immediately took up the defence of the great poet, and conducted it in his usual meek yet resolute manner, unmoved by the rude things with which Byron interrupted him,—'Oh, that's very well *for an atheist*,' &c. (Before meeting Shelley in Italy, I had seen him only once. It

[1] Byron, and Sheridan, and Shaw—all anti-Shakespeareans: why do the wits so often dislike the humorists?

was at my own house in St. James's Place, where he called upon me,—introducing himself,—to request the loan of some money which he wished to present to Leigh Hunt; and he offered me a bond for it. Having numerous claims upon me at that time, I was obliged to refuse the loan. Both in appearance and in manners Shelley was the perfect gentleman.)—That same day, after dinner, I walked in the garden with Byron. At the window of a neighbouring house was a young woman holding a child in her arms. Byron nodded to her with a smile, and then, turning to me, said, 'That child is mine.' In the evening, we (*i.e.* Byron, Shelley, Trelawney, and I) rode out from Pisa to a farm (a *podere*); and there a pistol was put into my hand for shooting at a mark (a favourite amusement of Byron); but I declined trying my skill with it. The farm-keeper's daughter was very pretty, and had her arms covered with bracelets, the gift of Byron, who did not fail to let me know that she was one of his many loves.

"I went with him to see the Campo Santo at Pisa. It was shown to us by a man who had two handsome daughters. Byron told me that he had in vain paid his addresses to the elder daughter, but that he was on the most intimate terms with the other. Probably there is not one syllable of truth in all this; for he always had the weakness of wishing to be thought much worse than he really was.

"Byron, like Sir Walter Scott, was without any feeling for the fine arts. He accompanied me to the Pitti Palace at Florence; but soon growing tired of looking at the pictures, he sat down in a corner; and when I called out to him, 'What a noble Andrea del Sarto!' the only answer I received was his muttering a passage from *The Vicar of Wakefield*,—'Upon asking how he had been taught the art of a cognoscento so very suddenly, he assured me that

nothing was more easy. The whole secret consisted in a strict adherence to two rules; the one, always to observe the picture might have been better if the painter had taken more pains; and the other, to praise the works of Pietro Perugino.'

"(When he and Hobhouse were standing before the Parthenon, the latter said, 'Well, this is surely very grand.' Byron replied, 'Very like the Mansion-House.'[1])

"At that time we generally had a regular quarrel every night; and he would abuse me through thick and thin, raking up all the stories he had heard which he thought most likely to mortify me,—how I had behaved with great cruelty to Murphy, refusing to assist him in his distress, &c. &c. But next morning he would shake me kindly by both hands; and we were excellent friends again.

"When I parted from him in Italy (never to meet him more), a good many persons were looking on, anxious to catch a glimpse of 'the famous lord.'"

No doubt this is a good account of what Rogers remembered of that interview; but here is what he felt, and wrote in *Italy*:—

"Much had passed
Since last we parted; and those five short years—
Much had they told! His clustering locks were turn'd
Grey; nor did aught recall the Youth that swam
From Sestos to Abydos. Yet his voice,
Still it was sweet; still from his eye the thought
Flashed lightning-like, nor lingered on the way,
Waiting for words. Far, far into the night
We sat conversing—no unwelcome hour

[1] Did Rogers forget his own praise of the Regent's Park Colosseum?

The hour we met; and when Aurora rose,
Rising, we climbed the rugged Apennine.

. . . . . He had just left that place
Of old renown, once in the Adrian sea,
Ravenna; where from Dante's sacred tomb
He had so oft, as many a verse declares,
Drawn inspiration; where, at twilight time,
Through the pine forest wandering with loose rein,
Wandering and lost, he had so oft beheld
(What is not visible to a Poet's eye?)
The spectre knight, the hell-hounds and their prey;
The chase, the slaughter, and the festal mirth
Suddenly blasted. 'Twas a theme he loved,
But others claimed their turn; and many a tower,
Shattered, uprooted from its native rock,
Its strength the pride of some heroic age,
Appeared and vanished (many a sturdy steer
Yoked and unyoked), while, as in happier days,
He poured his spirit forth. The past forgot,
All was enjoyment. Not a cloud obscured
Present or future.
He is now at rest,
And praise and blame fall on his ear alike,
Now dull in death. Yes, Byron, thou art gone;
Gone like a star that through the firmament
Shot and was lost, in its eccentric course
Dazzling, perplexing. Yet thy heart, methinks,
Was generous, noble—noble in its scorn
Of all things low or little; nothing there
Sordid or servile. If imagined wrongs
Pursued thee, urging thee sometimes to do
Things long regretted, oft, as many know,
None more than I, thy gratitude would build
On slight foundations; and if in thy life

Not happy, in thy death thou surely wert;
Thy wish accomplished; dying in the land
Where thy young mind had caught ethereal fire:
Dying in Greece, and in a cause so glorious.
They in thy train—ah, little did they think,
As round we went, that they so soon should sit
Mourning beside thee, while a Nation mourned,
Changing her festal for her funeral song;
That they so soon should hear the minute-gun,
As morning gleamed on what remained of thee,
Roll o'er the sea, the mountains, numbering
Thy years of joy and sorrow.
Thou art gone;
And he who would assail thee in thy grave,
Oh, let him pause! For who among us all,
Tried as thou wert—even from thine earliest years,
When wandering, yet unspoilt, a highland-boy—
Tried as thou wert, and with thy soul of flame;
Pleasure, while yet the down was on thy cheek,
Uplifting, pressing, and to lips like thine,
Her charmed cup—ah, who among us all
Could say he had not erred as much, and more!"

It is a generous tribute from a man who knew Byron well, and knew the circumstances of his tragic marriage—a man, too, rather punctilious in morals, and not likely to make excuses except on such grounds as most of us would feel may justify an excuse. And it ends on the right note, a note that should have given the egregious Southey pause.

The truth about Byron is that he was not only in his poetry, but in his manner of thought and life, a romantic modernist. The conflict between him and the England of his day was the conflict between the old and the new. The vile snobbery of Burke's saying that "vice itself lost

half its evil by losing all its grossness"[1] must have appeared to Byron, as it appears to us, one of the devil's own catchwords to tickle the ears of the groundlings. Yet that saying is typical of the time: not only vice, but everything was to be first veiled, and then excused. Religion might be indulged in—if it never passed into enthusiasm; freedom might be praised—if you were careful to suppress her manifestations; Art was to be admired—if you never suffered its exuberances; Poetry could be pursued—if you killed in it any tendencies to new life. Everything might be broken, all the commandments and all the decencies, so long as the veneer of existence never cracked.

Against this spirit one or two great men always stood out, fighting it in different ways and under different aspects. Johnson the great Tory is here at one with Fox the great Whig; and Wilson of Sodor and Man may take hands with that very different divine, Sydney Smith. The great power for truth, however—the greatest, perhaps, England has ever had—was John Wesley; and it is not, I believe, a fantastic thought which sees in Byron Wesley's most genuine successor. He was a sinner, and a shameless sinner; but we have no right to say he was unrepentant, and he was never the servant of falsehood. When we remember how easily he could have fallen into the light, hidden lusts of his peers, even his scandals take on a more splendid aspect. And when we remember his generosity, his passion for freedom, his affectionateness, his love for youth and for beauty and for truth; recollect the enormous service he did by mocking at the horrible graceless Court of his day, it is difficult not to think that his work for good is far beyond his influence for evil. His most glaring faults were possessed, and to a greater degree, by many men of

[1] *Reflections on the Revolution in France.*

his own rank and time who lived honoured lives and died in reputable beds; but he alone flamed before the eyes of gazing Europe as the champion of the oppressed; he alone, heedless of fashion and interest, was ready, for a despised people, to lay down his life.

Except in a few exceptional instances, Wesley's great work affected only the large mass of the middle-class: Byron attacked the hypocrisy of England at its head. Never again shall we have to endure the spectacle of a creature like Chesterfield lecturing on immoral deportment, and still keeping the respect of the world. The fable of the English aristocracy was shattered by Byron; and it was only a member of the House of Peers who could have killed it; and I doubt if methods less violent than Byron's could have produced the needed result. At times his attacks seem to lack dignity; but we must remember that dignity was one of the sins of the time: it was a cloak, a veil of truth which Byron was pledged to tear off. When the existing system was upheld by a Southey, when an O'Connell could put the glories of his rhetoric at the service of " the fourth of the fools and oppressors called ' George,' " plain words were needed in exposing the evil thing, plain words and good straightforward hitting. And if in the battle the figure of Byron, the lover of truth, gets obscured by the dust and the dirt, it is the dirt of the conflict—a conflict whose results we have inherited—while we are in some danger of forgetting the temptations, the struggles and the sorrow of the greatest of the protagonists.

CHARLES JAMES FOX

FROM THE PAINTING BY KARL ANTON HICKEL IN THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

CHAPTER X

CHARLES JAMES FOX

CHARLES JAMES FOX was the son of Henry Fox ("the most unpopular statesman of his time, not because he sinned more than any of them, but because he canted less"), by Lady Caroline Lennox, great-granddaughter of Charles II. and of Louise de Querouaille, Duchess of Portsmouth. Fox, and not the tired wastrel of continental travels, nor the mild Cardinal of the Roman Court, was really the last of the Stuarts; and, though his reign was brief and troubled, the last and greatest of the Stuart kings. He had all the true Stuart characteristics, together with a stability of character which may have come from his other royal ancestor Henri IV. of France; or perhaps it was an inheritance from his paternal grandfather. Stuart is the prevailing note about Fox's life in its youth, its maturity and its decline; but it is Stuart of a nobler, finer quality than we find in the legitimate line. It is true that, in the fashion of his nearer ancestors, he was extravagant and eccentric. Before he was twenty-four he gambled away £140,000; he travelled across France to buy a waistcoat; he was ready for any folly and any wickedness, except to betray a friend or divulge a confidence. He was Stuart in his love of learning, recalling James I., that most learned and pedantic of monarchs, in the extent of his acquirements, and Charles I. and II. in his sound taste and independent judgement. But he was greater than the Stuart kings before him in that he

never confused the values of things. Though he gamed extravagantly, monstrously—it was always gaming; he never made play the business of his life; though he lived with an unmarried woman (and, at his father's filthy instigation, unwillingly sowed "wild oats" in Paris) he loved Homer "because he spoke well of women," and after he had married his mistress, no man was his friend who was not ready to honour his wife.

Then he was Stuart to the full, in the highest and most inexplicable (in many cases) of Stuart qualities: the capacity for evoking and preserving attachment and affection. "There are only forty of them," barked the savage Thurlow of Fox's followers, "but they would all hang for Fox;" and Gibbon, most cynical of historians, Gibbon the unenthusiastic and undemonstrative could say, "Perhaps no human being was ever more perfectly exempt from the taint of malevolence, vanity, or falsehood."

Rogers' intimate friendship with Fox began about 1796, although he had met him as early as 1791. They were drawn together largely by their common love of literature; and no doubt the chief binding force was the fascination that Fox exercised over those with whom he wished to be friendly. Rogers noted, in 1791, that "in conversation Fox's countenance brightened" (he had the rather heavy Stuart features) "and his voice assumed a pleasant tone": Rogers' connected recollections of the great statesman begin at a dinner in March 1796, and do not end till Fox's death in 1806. These recollections are the most revealing record we have of Fox's mature opinions on politics, art, literature, and men; for they are less considered than his great orations, and naturally freer to range over any aspect of any particular subject. We gather a

vivid idea of the kind of man that the young dandy had grown into from Rogers' copious reminiscences :—

"When I became acquainted with Fox, he had given up that kind of life entirely, and resided in the most perfect sobriety and regularity at St. Anne's Hill. There he was very happy, delighting in study, in rural occupations and rural prospects. He would break from a criticism on Porson's Euripides to look for the little pigs. I remember his calling out to the Chertsey hills, when a thick mist, which had for some time concealed them, rolled away, 'Good morning to you! I am glad to see you again.' There was a walk in his grounds which led to a lane through which the farmers used to pass; and he would stop them, and talk to them, with great interest, about the price of turnips, &c. I was one day with him in the Louvre, when he suddenly turned from the pictures, and, looking out of the window, exclaimed, 'This hot sun will burn up my turnips at St. Anne's Hill.'

"In London mixed society Fox conversed little; but at his own house in the country, with his intimate friends, he would talk on for ever, with all the openness and simplicity of a child: he has continued talking to me for half an hour after he had taken up his bed-room candle. —I have seen it somewhere stated that Fox liked to talk about great people: nothing can be more untrue; he hardly ever alluded to them. I remember, indeed, that he once mentioned to me Queen Caroline, calling her 'that bad woman.'

"He was very shy, and disliked being stared at. Windham and I accompanied him one night to Vauxhall, where he was much annoyed at being followed about, as a spectacle, from place to place. On such occasions he was not only shy, but *gauche*.

"One morning at his own house, while speaking to me of his travels, Fox could not recollect the name of a particular town in Holland, and was much vexed at the treacherousness of his memory. He had a dinner-party that day; and, just as he had applied the carving-knife to the sirloin, the name of the town having suddenly occurred to him, he roared out exultingly, to the astonishment of the company, 'Gorcum, Gorcum!'

"Never in my life did I hear anything equal to Fox's *speeches in reply*,—they were wonderful.—Burke did not do himself justice as a speaker: his manner was hurried, and he always seemed to be in a passion.—Pitt's voice sounded as if he had worsted in his mouth."

Of peculiar interest are Fox's judgements on literature. He anticipated in a great many things the more modern views of poetry, although he preferred the heroic couplet to any other. I have before referred to his admiration for Euripides, and it is possible that he found in him something of that revolutionary rationalism which Professor Verrall has contrived to excavate. He suggested that Shakespeare may have seen a translation of Euripides, and remarks the resemblance between the leave-taking of Alcestis and the servants, and that between Queen Catherine and hers.

Homer, however, was, as he should be to all Greek lovers, the god of his idolatry. "Everything is to be found in Homer." Homer was full of delicacy; and he instances Penelope's avoidance of the name of Troy, and "also her not mentioning Ulysses by name"—a fact which our modern anthropological scholars probably ascribe to some West Australian tabu. He wavered over the discussion as to the authorship of the poems; Payne Knight, a relative of Rogers, attempted to persuade him that the

Iliad and Odyssey were written by different people. Fox, before he heard the arguments, said "he was inclined to say he would not believe it." As to the old question of the relative merits of the two great poems, he took up a ground with which most of us can sympathize. "I will not say I would rather have written the Odyssey—but know I would rather read it. I believe it's the first tale in the world. It's that everlasting combat in the Iliad that I can never get over." He had a perfect passion for the Epic, which I trust was shared by his wife, for he "read nine Epic Poems aloud to Mrs. Fox, in one winter (if I could call Lucretius one, which it is not); Iliad, Odyssey, Apollonius Rhodius, Eneid, Tasso, Ariosto, Milton's Paradise Lost, and Regained, Fairy Queen. Two of them by far the most entertaining to read, whatever may be their other merits—The Odyssey, and The Orlando Furioso."

Whether all these were read in translations or not, Rogers does not say: it is worth notice that Fox was so far a slave to the taste of his day as to think "his Homer was probably Pope's best work."

Other classical writers he mentioned to Rogers, beside his favourite Euripides ("the most precious thing left us—the most like Shakespeare"), were Demosthenes and Cicero. He "wondered why so judicious a writer as Quintilian should think of comparing them, as each had what the other wanted. Demosthenes had vehemence—Cicero had playful allusions, beautiful images, philosophical digressions. Admired Demosthenes most; he was certainly the greater orator—but he read Cicero with most pleasure, and that, perhaps, was one proof among others why Demosthenes was the better orator. Cicero's letters did indeed fill a great gap in the Roman History—they were almost the whole of it."

Virgil he had an affection for; and he comments on that note of recurrent pathos which so many since have marked as the abiding characteristic of the author of the *Æneid*. Over Cæsar's Commentaries he was not enthusiastic; he found them "unentertaining. There is a want of thought in them—dry, and affecting to be written briefly, and in a hurry—Came here; went there. His letter to Oppius and Cornelius Balbus the most striking thing to his honour, and seldom mentioned. Had sent for a Cicero and copied it out to transmit it to Bonaparte, when the news of D'Enghien's death arrived and prevented him."

Fox when he told Rogers this had just returned from Paris, where he had been Napoleon's guest; it is evidence of the limitations of his political outlook that he could have compared Cæsar and Bonaparte—Cæsar who if anything was too gentlemanly, with Napoleon who, in his greatest moments, never rose above the uneasy courtesies of the cad. It was precisely the spirit of vulgarity, of the charlatan, of self-deception, if you will, that just prevents Bonaparte being ranked with the real world-conquerors; which makes one sure that he will always be more careful of the assertion of his honour and power, than of honour and power themselves.

In English literature Fox, in these conversations with Rogers, dealt most with Shakespeare. This is a shrewd criticism on Macbeth: "Perhaps the most original character and most masterly in Shakespeare is Macbeth. It is nowhere else to be found—exciting our pity at first, and gradually growing worse and worse—till at last the only virtue that remains in him is his courage." With *Macbeth*, he placed *Lear* and *Hamlet* as the best plays; he had no doubt that Hamlet's insanity was assumed, and had a particular admiration for the Ghost—"the first ever

conceived in every respect." I think for the moment he must have forgotten the astonishing dramatic force of dead Banquo's entry into the dining-hall—surely more striking than the apparition of the King of Denmark.

To Milton he could not do justice. No doubt, here again, as in the case of Cæsar, he was prejudiced through politics, for Milton's particular variety of illiberal liberalism could not have appealed to him; and unlike most lovers of the classics he did not like Latin and Greek methods in English poetry. "Milton not English—could never forgive him for expecting to interest him through twelve books, in which there was nothing like nature; or for writing anything but English—full of inversions and affected phrases. Confessed himself an anti-Miltonite—acknowledged the beauty of 'beat out life,' and of his use of little words."

It seems odd to choose the grim savagery of

> "Whereat he inly raged, and as they talked,
> Smote him into the midriff, with a stone
> That beat out life,"

as remarkable for beauty; and it is still odder that Fox (and we must suppose Rogers) forgot such wonderful passages as the description of Eve's flowery bed, or the unapproachable pathos of the conclusion of *Paradise Lost:* probably the stupid sense of Johnson's judgement prevented any one of that era, except some rebel Irishman, like Grattan, from finding beauty in *Lycidas*. On another occasion Fox insisted that "he did not admire any of Milton's verse; thought it inverted and artificial, though the defect is less visible in the grand parts; particularly liked

> 'Fame, that last infirmity of noble minds,'

and the sonnet to Skinner." Still he defended Milton against the absurd charge that he was lacking "in Harmony"; although all he could say of the prose of the man who wrote *Areopagitica* was: "The poets wrote the best prose—Cowley's very sweet; Milton's excepted—more extravagant than his verse, as if written in ridicule of the latter."

He was modern again in preferring Dryden to Pope; he particularly admired *The Hind and the Panther*, and Dryden's power of arguing in verse. On Pope he can be for the time surprisingly severe and just. His knowledge of the middle ages—"There are no dark ages," he said; and, at another time, "The middle ages were never very dark, always producing some able men"—gave him a juster idea of the value of *Abelard and Eloisa* than had most of his contemporaries. He told Rogers that he "thought Pope's Eloisa to Abelard 'about half and half'; and particularly disliked 'Give all thou can'st,' &c., and 'Oh! make me mistress to the man I love,' only a common vulgar sentiment, and not as it is in her letters 'the wife of Abelard.' Eloisa much greater in her letters than Pope made her."

Pope in his preface to his translation compared Homer with Virgil. "Ah," said Fox, "when a man writes a preface, he tries only to say an antithesis, and never thinks of the truth"—a sentence that disposes very justly of much of the eighteenth century's worst criticism.

Again he anticipates modern taste in his hearty condemnation of *The Mourning Bride*, "execrable everywhere;" and of *Pizarro*, "the worst thing possible." He exaggerated Vanbrugh's talent, "almost as great a genius as ever lived;" but he is one of the first critics to deal justly with Johnson's bad epigram on Shakespeare. "I detest

such metaphors as Johnson's 'existence saw him spurn her bounded reign,' and not less the second line, 'And panting time toiled after him in vain,' as not only inelegant, but contrary to our ideas of time, which is generally represented as swift." Then there are a few admirable hints like, "No man, I maintain, could be ill-tempered, who wrote so much nonsense as Swift;" and on Gray's "'tis folly to be wise"—"'Tis a misfortune to be knowing, it should be." Rogers rashly confessed his indifference to rhyme, and Fox has the excellent retort ready: "The antients could do without it; but their verse was not superior to it. It is at least equal to antient verse, and perhaps the most perfect thing yet invented. It is a thing to repose upon, and often suggests the thought. Blank verse is perhaps best for dramatic poetry."

Rogers gives a good account of the house where most of the conversations took place, that house in the country, where the country-loving Fox lived, apparently caring more for pigs than politics, and as much for onions as Art.

"1803. January. A visit to St. Anne's—a small low white house on the brow of a hill, commanding a semi-circular sweep, rich and woody. In the small drawing-room, Sir Joshua Reynolds' 'Girl with the Mouse-trap.' In the hall books and statues. The library on the first floor—small and unadorned—the books on open shelves. Engraved portraits, principally after Sir Joshua Reynolds, all over the house. In the garden-passage a copy in black marble of the Eagle at Strawberry Hill; and a bust of Hippocrates, with a Latin inscription by Lord Holland, found in Italy. In the eating-room a portrait of Lord Holland sitting, carefully painted by Reynolds; and of Lady Holland sitting, by Romney. Several good old pictures. In the garden a handsome architectural green-

house, and a temple after a design of Lord Newburgh (who also designed Kingsgate, and of whose taste he thinks highly), containing busts of Charles J. Fox, Lord Holland, and a son of Lord Bolingbroke, all by Nollekens. The garden laid out in open and shrubbery walks, trees breaking the prospect everywhere. The kitchen garden a square, not walled, and skirted by the walk. In the lower part is something in imitation of the Nuneham Flower-garden. There is a terrace-walk, thickly planted, to a neat farm-house; in which there is a tea-room, the chimney-piece relieved with a Fox. The drawing-room prettily furnished with pink silk in panels, inclosed with an ebony head, and a frame of blue silk; made of old gowns."

There are a few comments on men and things which are worth reproducing:—

"Gibbon a great coxcomb—his portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds is over the fireplace at Lausanne, and he used to look at it as often as if it had been his mistress's."

As to Gibbon's history, Fox made the sound, if not enthusiastic, criticism, that if any man were to say, "'I don't like his history, I will acquire the information another way,' he would find it a very hard task. I can excuse almost everything in Elizabeth but the execution of Mary. —Except William the Third she was the best of them.— We have not had a good set."

There are not many notable sayings in politics—which were never Rogers' chief interest, and had less interest in the year 1803 and onwards for Fox than they used to have; or at least he was glad then to discuss other things. But how typical this is of the time and the man: "I always say, and always think, that of all the countries in Europe, England will be the last to be free. Russia will be free before England. The Russians know no better,

and knowledge might and would operate on them to good ; but the English have the knowledge and the slavery too." And what sound sense he shows, what freedom from cant in " a man must have a grand want of right feeling and right thinking, who does not like popularity, who does not wish the people about him, and for and with whom he acts, to be in good humour with him." And, were Fox alive to-day, I do not think he would have much to alter in the following declaration, except to adjust " the burden of property " to other shoulders besides those of " the King and the landed men." " Property will always have its influence. Were all the Landed men in the Country to unite in a mass, you will say that they might effect anything. Their income is twenty-five millions ; but the King's is the same, and though part merges in the interest of the debt, still you will grant it has its influence."

One aspect of eighteenth-century—and indeed of pre-Victorian politics generally—that cannot fail to attract the attention of the most casual student, is the greater freedom from insularity, or, shall I say, from " Anglification." No doubt the determination, now so common, to regard all continental nations as enemies, and to denounce any British citizen who deplores a war in which England takes part as an " anti-patriot," is due, in some degree, to our greater sense of the responsibilities of the Empire : though it is difficult at times to see that those responsibilities exercise the minds of our Imperialists to any extent beyond " profaning " and abusing their political opponents. It is true, of course, that Fox was denounced as a Bonapartist, and that after his death the baser kind of newspaper —by no means a modern discovery, that base newspaper— pointed out with scorn that England's enemies wept for Fox, while they rejoiced at the death of Pitt. But Fox

was not regarded by serious men as something of a cross between a parricide and a traitor. Burke (though he said his great opponent and erstwhile friend was like a cat, "fond of the house after the family had left it," when Fox remained loyal to the cause of freedom in France) still retained his respect for him. And there was behind the pro-Revolution movement a large body of popular feeling; and a similar body of feeling behind the outcry against the American War. Rogers remembered that, when he was a boy, his father at family prayers told them all the cause of the rebellion in the Colonies, and showed them that England was in the wrong, and that they must not wish the Americans to be conquered. When the news of Lexington arrived, that battle in which nine hundred English soldiers fired at a troop of seventy Americans, Thomas Rogers put on mourning "because he had lost several friends in New England." That was the spirit of Fox's early political career, that was the spirit to which he could securely appeal in that great series of speeches in 1775 to 1782. It is easy to point out now that there was truth on both sides; that the weakness of philosophic Radicalism, as I have said earlier in this book, was its ignorance of human nature, and its belief that right ends would always be pursued by right means. But it was a spirit with which we could very well do to-day. The only international movement now, which at all answers to the international philosophy of the Encyclopædia, is the Socialist cause; and I doubt if that is a real equivalent. For one thing, in so far as the movement is international, a good deal of it is on the fringe of Anarchism, and the more violent "Red Flag" propaganda. As far as the soberer, larger elements are concerned, there is no evidence that the German Socialists are Socialists first and Germans

afterwards; nothing to show that they would make any effective protest against an aggressive Imperial war instigated from Berlin.

On the whole I do not think the cause of European federation has increased, or the chances of European war diminished, since Charles James Fox stood for freedom.

Has there been any real advance in that other cause, for which Fox pleaded so nobly, the cause of the liberties of Ireland? Catholic disabilities have gone; the land laws have been bettered; England has helped Ireland in matters of trade; many will say that the Irish agriculturist has been better treated than the English. And still Ireland is dissatisfied; and rightly dissatisfied. When a man clamours for release from prison, it is not the way of justice to decorate his cell, and improve the outlook from his window. When a man craves dissolution from a partnership, it is no consolation to point out to him how the profits of the business are increasing, and how his share will be bigger: everything is tainted by the Union, everything is overshadowed by the Castle. England has given Ireland many things; when will she give her justice? All the gifts and all the concessions are no more than bribes to quiet the tempted, and sops to silence the hungry; Ireland still cries for justice. England may call her ungrateful; she may continue to point out the advantages, the glories, the triumphs of the Irish under English rule. Ireland still cries for justice. It is years ago, England says, that the Union was effected: it must remain. And the lapse of years, cries Ireland, makes injustice more intolerable, makes the burden of our suffering more terrible to bear.

England has abducted Ireland; and though she line the boudoir with satin and load the girl she has stolen

with jewels ; though she take from her the care of the house and fill her cupboards with treasures, Ireland still cries for justice. The cry of Ireland is the cry of the unwilling bride ; the song of Ireland is the song of a bird that has been trapped in the dark. It is the sun no doubt that streams—sometimes—through the bars ; but ah ! God, the bars, the bars through which it streams !

" I would rather," said Fox, " see Ireland totally separated from the crown of England than kept in obedience only by force. Unwilling subjects are little better than enemies ; it would be better not to have subjects at all, than to have such as would be continually on the watch to seize the opportunity of making themselves free." Is there a word of that which does not apply to the Ireland of to-day ?

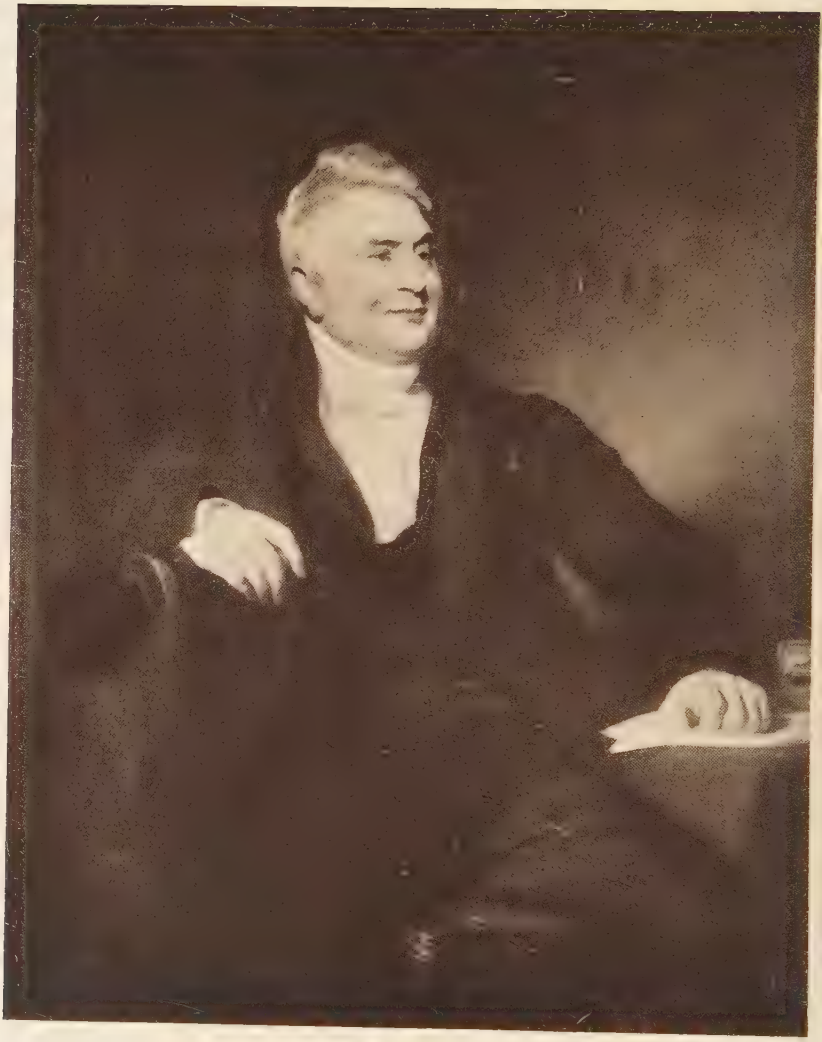
Still, whatever injustices remain to be remedied, in one respect we have gained enormously since Fox spoke and fought. We have acquired a far greater measure of political freedom. I have quoted Fox's bitter saying, comparing Russia and England ; and there is a truth in the contention of some Russians that there is more freedom even now in Russia than in England. There is there, with all the political oppression, with all the religious intolerance, a real *liberté des moeurs*—a freedom from convention that, in some ways, atone for the political slavery. Of course this is more properly the spirit of fraternity than the spirit of freedom. It is the spirit which made the England of Edward IV. far less open to the charge of inequality than the England of Edward VII. The Canterbury Pilgrimage could scarcely be reproduced to-day ; or if it was, the pilgrims would travel, conveniently segregated, in the " classes " which distinguish our railway accommodation. In Cornwall, or Wales, you still meet the old-

fashioned freedom of intercourse between rich and poor, employer and employed. I have known a Cornish beggar call across the street to a man hurrying to business, "I say, I want to speak to 'ee;" and when the other had crossed over, "I say, can 'ee lend me sixpence?" Now that could no doubt be easily paralleled in Russia; but not so easily in England: rector-craft and squire-craft have effectually crushed that spirit in most of our villages. And it is possible that Fox had some thought of this in his mind. He certainly hit the nail on the head in saying "that the English have the knowledge and the slavery." A terrible and horrible thing is done in the land. Our prophets prophecy falsely, and our priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so. That is the curse of the English temperament. That fatal disregard for truth, that hatred of extremes, that passion for shoddy compromise—by which the only folk who are benefited are those who ought to be shook and stirred out of the slumbrous satisfaction of their content. At times they are stirred. Fox was one of the greatest of our national saviours: Fox, born the son of pleasant vices, was verily made an instrument to scourge the vices of his country, that horrible self-satisfaction, that passion for avoiding reality, that stupid contempt for those of other tongues and other nations.

I will end, as I began this chapter, with an insistence of the true Stuart in him. Poor Perdita Robinson, immortalized by Gainsborough and by a mention in Coleridge (to whom she dedicated her own poems), when deserted by her royal lover, fell on evil times. The fourth George, then only Regent, was content to forget and neglect her. Fox pleaded for her; Perdita's own poverty pleaded for her; but George was obdurate. Fox insisted, and at last

"Prinny" yielded, like the unjust judge, and gave some pittance to the broken vessel of his pleasures. Can't we discern in that noble action of Fox's the feeble stammer of his dissolute ancestor, sensual, selfish, popular "Old Rowley"—"Don't let poor Nellie starve." Yes; even Charles II. remembered his mistresses; and Charles' descendant was not above pleading with the creature who disgraced even Charles' throne, pleading with him to remember his discarded love.

"A poor set," as Fox said, they had been; but thank God, there have always been prominent men who have had real and royal virtues: we find the king's spirit in a king's unacknowledged son, and even an uncrowned bastard Stuart was worth the gentleman in Guelph who usurped the throne.



SYDNEY SMITH

FROM THE PAINTING BY HENRY PERRONET BRIGGS, R.A., IN THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

CHAPTER XI

SYDNEY SMITH

FEW things are more ironical than that Sydney Smith should be remembered now, chiefly as a wit, a fun-maker, and a good fellow. He was all these; but he was too a clergyman who was an ardent Reformer, in days when that combination was rarer than it is now; he was, perhaps, the most successful political panphleteer since Swift; he was a politician of unblemished honesty, and in many things besides politics he was singularly ahead of his time. If any remember him now, except as a humorist, they probably remember him for his mistakes, his attacks on Methodism and Puseyism, his discouragement of Indian Missions—and forget the man who fought the cause of Catholic Emancipation, who praised Mrs. Fry, and pleaded for the woes of Ireland in language as plain and as fervid as that of Lord Byron's. They forget the man who was a model parish priest in the country, who took as much interest in his Yorkshire or Somerset labourers as in the congregations that flocked to hear him in Bristol Cathedral, or in St. Paul's; or as in the audiences of ladies who came to his lectures on philosophy. It has been said that he is forgotten because most of the causes for which he fought have been won. There is a fallacy and a misstatement in this. Swift and Macaulay are still remembered as politicians; Defoe's *Short Way with Dissenters* still has readers, though the subjects on which they wrote are concerned with causes that either success or oblivion has overtaken.

Nor have all Sydney Smith's causes been won : he stands almost alone among prominent public-school men as a rebel against the public-school system. His attacks have never been answered ; the system is still full, it would appear, of life and energy. And I doubt if Smith, any more than Fox, would be satisfied with the present condition of Ireland. No ; the causes of the neglect of Sydney Smith lie deeper than this. No doubt something is due to that stupidest of feelings in the public mind that a wag cannot possibly be a serious author, or a serious publicist : a piece of folly on a par with denying a soul to a jester. It is true that too often Smith is content with beating his companions with the authorized bladder in which the dry pease of his jokes rattle a joyful accompaniment to the beating ; but there is excellent serious writing in the three volumes of his works, writing that no lover of English literature and no student of English history can ignore.

I believe that the modern neglect of Smith is partly due to a very decided change in our methods of political thought. The politics of the time of Queen Anne are frankly and openly riddled with chicanery and jobbery ; Marlborough, in his infamous corruption, is exceptional, but only exceptional in the grandeur of his lapses from average morals. Politics then appealed quite plainly to the baser elements in mankind—to fear, to greed, to national conceit. This is a temper that is again prominent, if not pervasive in English political life ; and it has been prominent for the last thirty or forty years. We have been ruled lately too much by old men and lawyers ; men without generosity, without indiscretion, without the fine faculty of failing gloriously with Truth, instead of creeping into a slimy success on the path of error. Now all this temper is poles asunder from the political temper of the

early years of the last century. It was the day then of high hearts, and great hopes and sincere passion. The zeal that men denounced in religion they acclaimed in politics; and while Smith could scoff at the enthusiasm of Methodists, he could show a spirit that was wildly enthusiastic when he denounced the Agitation against Papists, or sneered at the vaunted discipline of public schools. The present tendency in all parties, and among nearly all politicians, to prefer expediency to truth, and success to either, is not favourable to the spirit of honesty which lightens all Sydney Smith's writings. And while there may be some, here and there, in the political field, who can still appeal, either from the high Tory, or the old-fashioned Liberal, or the Socialist standpoint, to self-sacrifice and truth, and generosity, and honour—most of the subjects that to-day are "burning," need a more modern advocacy than Smith's. The causes for which he fought and the questions which he debated are not all won and settled; but the field of conflict has changed, and the plan of campaign must change with it. But as the Duke of Wellington found Cæsar's Commentaries useful in the Peninsular War, so I would commend the three podgy volumes of 1854 to all who want a handbook in which to pick up hints on any conflict with humbug, and cant, and political jobbery.

Sydney Smith was born in 1771, and was educated at a private school at Cheltenham (where he went when he was six) and at Winchester. Of Winchester he could never speak without a shudder. He suffered, says his daughter, "many years of misery and positive starvation," and he no doubt learned there the truth about public schools which he afterwards so forcibly expressed. He became Captain at Winchester, and went naturally to New College, where

he was entitled to a Scholarship and Fellowship, to which he proceeded as soon as possible. From this time he had to support himself, and by the necessity for doing so adequately was led into writing for the *Edinburgh Review*, to which he contributed seventy-seven articles in the years 1802 to 1827. In 1827 Lord Lyndhurst presented him to a Canonry at Bristol—Smith had been ordained, rather against his inclinations, but in accord with his father's wishes, in 1795 — where he inaugurated his arrival by preaching a Toleration sermon on 5 November (then a festival of the Church of England), and from the date of his descent upon that amazed Chapter may be marked the revival of Church life at Bristol. Five years after his appointment at Bristol, Lord Grey presented Smith to a Prebendal Stall at St. Paul's ; and till his death in 1845, his life and his work henceforth varied between the London Cathedral and the country living of Combe Florey.

It is curious that our two most prominent literary clergymen, Smith and Swift, should both have been rather unsuited to the profession, and should both have taken a conscientious view of their duties, and been not unsuccessful as clerics. Swift's unsuitability, it is true, is vastly more obvious than Sydney Smith's ; for in Swift's theories there seem at times a strong vein of thought opposed to the very spirit of Christianity. With Sydney Smith this is emphatically not the case ; he was always a sincere Christian ; and though he might have developed on unorthodox lines, as did "Bobus," I think it is unlikely. There is some evidence that he had qualms about the Articles, and solved them in a manner too often erroneously supposed to have been originated by Newman in Tract XC. In one of his letters Smith says there is no such thing as a "just" war ; and the reference to the Article in its Latin

version is fairly patent, as also is the deduction as to how Smith had reconciled his views on war with his assent to the Thirty-Nine Articles.

At the time when Sydney Smith "entered the Church" the idea of vocation was extremely uncommon among the English clergy; and he frankly regards the Church as a profession, and compares its chances, in after life, most unfavourably with those of the law. But it would be false to gather from this that Smith did not hold a high view of his profession. It is simply that to him the only aspect of the clerical office that appealed was that of a Christian selected by other Christians to be their spokesman, their representative, and, in a manner, their guide. Such a view of the ministry is not the whole truth, but we are in danger of forgetting that it is an important part of the truth; and that the revival of sacerdotalism, necessary and wholesome as it was, may lead to that most disastrous of things, a revival of clericalism. The parson of Smith's type was emphatically one who had his uses, if only in providing a useful corrective to those Bishops and Clergy who magnified, not their office, but the insignia and trappings of their office, and the accidental position which their office gave them. Sydney Smith was an impressive preacher; and there were friends of his who preferred him in the pulpit, who appealed from Sydney punning to Sydney preaching.

After two years' service as a curate in "the middle of Salisbury Plain," Smith started out to Weimar as tutor to the son of the Squire of his parish. War broke out in Germany, and Smith only got as far as Edinburgh, where he stayed five years, and helped Jeffrey to found the *Review*, to whose success he was so largely to contribute. Here in Sydney Smith's own words is a list of the evils

from which England then suffered: "The Catholics were not emancipated—the Corporation Test Acts were unrepealed—the Game Laws were horribly oppressive—Steel Traps and Spring Guns were set all over the country—Prisoners tried for their lives could have no Counsel—Lord Eldon and the Court of Chancery pressed heavily upon mankind—Libel was punished by the most cruel and vindictive imprisonments—the principles of Political Economy were but little understood—the Law of Debt and of Conspiracy were upon the worst possible footing—the enormous wickedness of the Slave Trade was tolerated—" and he claims, with no little justification, that towards the removal or alleviation of these evils the *Edinburgh Review* gave no small assistance.

Sydney Smith left Edinburgh in 1803 and for six years lived in London, where his only clerical work was preaching at Fitzroy Chapel, Berkeley Chapel, and the Foundling Hospital; an effort to have a pulpit of his own in an abandoned chapel of the New Jerusalem sect failed owing to the hostility of the Vicar of the parish. In 1809 he left London for Foston-le-Clay in Yorkshire, of which he had been non-resident Vicar for two years. In those six years he had stormed Holland House, nearly sent the Siddons, who had determined to preserve her gravity, into hysterics with laughter, startled all Great Britain with the Peter Plymley letters (published anonymously), and become one of the best known men in London.

Lord Holland, "nephew of Fox and friend of Grey," as he wrote about himself, together with his eccentric, imperious, and rather unamiable wife, was for years the leader of Whig society in London. In their patronage of letters they extended their favour even to Tory authors. Lord Holland was an amiable, capable, but by no means striking

person. His character was, as Smith said of his own, "an amalgam"; he had a remarkable talent in mixing incongruous materials. He was a unifier: he provided a common ground for men whose abilities overshadowed his own, but who without him might not have produced so practical an effect on the political life of their time. He settled down to a respectable existence after one wild action, which I can hardly suspect him of having instigated. He and Lady Webster, who had been Miss Vassall, a West Indian heiress, eloped together; and after she had been divorced by her husband, Elizabeth Webster became Elizabeth Lady Holland. Of Lady Holland's character and eccentricities many contemporary records exist. No doubt a good deal of her insolent behaviour was due to that early escapade, which some people were never ready to forget or forgive; but there is no doubt that she was an exceptionally overbearing woman—a female bully, whose manners could only be improved by the rough methods of Petrucchio. Sometimes her rudeness was amusing; more often it seems to us merely tiresome, as when she snatches some flowers out of Mrs. Norton's hair, or snaps out at Rogers, "Your poetry is bad enough, so pray be sparing of your prose." Of course she must have had considerable force of character behind her rudeness, or she would never have succeeded in maintaining a salon for forty years, to which all the world of politics and literature were proud to come. But I think it is possible to exaggerate this line of defence. It is astonishing how much habit has to do with such social matters as the reputation of a particular house; and Lord Holland's soothing effect must not be forgotten. Then Lady Holland did not despise the more practical details of parties. The dinner was the great event at Holland House, and she knew how to pro-

vide for the wants and please the tastes of all her guests, and as they were nearly all men, this no doubt made a great deal of difference to the popularity of the house. It is true her parties were overcrowded, but Rogers said this added to the feeling of good-fellowship; and men do not much care how they eat, if what they eat is to their liking.

Women did not frequent Holland House, and women, as might be expected, had no love for its mistress; and the virtual ostracism she suffered from many of her own sex, and the angry resentment she aroused in those younger than herself, probably added to the bitterness of character that so often showed itself in rudeness of behaviour and vehemence of speech.

Lord and Lady Holland were both of the straitest sect of Whigs, more "orthodox" even than Fox would have been. It was Lord Holland who, with the Duke of Sussex, protested against the sending of Napoleon to St. Helena, as unworthy of the magnanimity of a great country; "and the treaties by which, after his captivity, we bound ourselves to detain him in custody at the will of the sovereigns to whom he never surrendered himself, appear to me repugnant to the principles of equity, and utterly uncalled for by expediency or necessity." The weakness of this attitude is that Holland had nothing practicable to suggest as an alternative. What else could be done with Napoleon? That question remains unanswered. Also it shows a rare confusion of thought to treat Napoleon as if he were the upholder of the liberties of the people, and entitled to respect not only as a fellow-opponent, but as the victim, in some mysterious way, of Tory misrule. Smith, with his hatred of war, had no sympathy for the extreme Holland House view, and frankly said that he preferred the Bourbons

to Bonaparte. Lady Holland, however, mourned for "the poor, dear man," and refused to be comforted. She sent him newspapers, books, and delicacies in his captivity, and through Lord Holland attempted to secure for the Emperor a more generous gaoler than Sir Hudson Lowe. In response to these attentions Napoleon left her his snuff-box, with the brief note: "L'Empéreur Napoléon à Lady Holland: témoignage de satisfaction et d'estime." Lord Holland wrote to Rogers: "I need not tell you how gratified (even in her grief at the loss, or rather death) of such a man, Lady H. was at his recollection of her." The snuff-box was presented to Lady Holland by Count Bertrand and Count Montholon, who dressed, for the purpose, in the Imperial uniform, a characteristic Gallic touch which rather annoyed Lord Holland.

To Holland House Sydney Smith went, in nervousness, his daughter says, when he was first in London; and he remained always one of the most favoured of its habitués. When Lady Holland was in her tantrums, Smith merely laughed, reeling out reams of chaff which, if they did not conquer his victim, left the rest of the company helpless with laughter. At Holland House he met Rogers, and the two, so opposite in humour and character, formed a friendship which did not end till Smith's death. Though the friendship was interrupted by Smith's removal to the country, it was never broken off, and Rogers was a welcome guest at Combe Florey, but he never went so far afield as Foston.

Smith remained at Foston, with visits to Edinburgh and London, until his appointment to Bristol, where he speedily became popular. He ceased contributing to the *Edinburgh Review* as he did not think that anonymous writing was becoming for a dignitary of the Church; and

he threw himself vehemently into the reform of Church life at Bristol, and the improvement of the labourers' conditions.

The last journalistic war which he undertook has been rather misunderstood. It was an attack upon the Ecclesiastical Commission of 1837; and Smith attacked it on the grounds that the Commission had no one to protect the inferior clergy; that the powers granted the Commissioners were arbitrary; and that if the revenues of the Church were to be redistributed the Bishops' incomes and palaces might well come under revision. In fact the thesis of his letter to Singleton on the Commission is the same as that which inspired the *Edinburgh Review* paper on Persecuting Bishops. In the first letter he tells Archdeacon Singleton that "till thirty years of age I never received a farthing from the Church; then £50 per annum for two years;—then nothing for ten years—then £500 per annum increased for two or three years to £800, till in my grand climacteric, I was made Canon of St. Paul's; and before that period I had built a Parsonage-house, with farm-offices for a large farm, which cost me £4000, and had reclaimed another from ruins at the expense of £2000. A Lawyer, or a Physician in good practice, would smile at this picture of Ecclesiastical wealth; and yet I am considered a perfect monster of Ecclesiastical prosperity." We may think that Smith is over-diligent about the loaves and fishes; but he had known poverty, and he always fought not for his own hand—he was in this case attacking his friends the Whigs—but for his poorer brethren.

The humour of Sydney Smith was of a kind that, if it were not for Rabelais, one would call peculiarly English: it is not the savage wit of idea like Swift's, nor the cold wit of theory like Voltaire's, nor the wicked wit of such a man as "Erewhon" Butler: it is an open-air, open-handed

kind of wit ; like a wind on a sunny day. It is of the same kind as the wit in *Pantagruel,* though it has not got behind it an equal intellectual force : it deals with the exaggeration of the commonplace, with the grotesque aspect of ordinary things, or the beautiful aspect of odd things : it springs from a lively power of juxtaposing images, apparently unrelated, as in the famous story of the child stroking the shell of the tortoise to please the tortoise—" You might as well stroke the Dome of St. Paul's to please the Dean and Chapter," cried Smith. There are signs of a similar power of exaggerative fun in Kingsley's *Water Babies ;* but the mode of that book is rather too conscious an imitation of Rabelais. Sydney Smith's wit is more infectious, more purely temperamental. How admirable is the reasoned folly of this !

" Did you say a Quaker baby ? Impossible ! there is no such thing ; there never was ; they are always born broad-brimmed and in full quake. . . . Well, all I can say is, I never saw one ; and what is still more remarkable, I never met with one who had. Do you believe in it ? Lady Morley does not. Have you heard the report that they are fed on drab-coloured pap ? It must be this that gives them their beautiful complexions. I have a theory about them and bluecoat boys, which I will tell you some day." Follows the theory in a letter to Lady Morley :—

No date.

" Dear Lady Morley,—Pray understand me rightly : I do not give the bluecoat theory as an established fact, but as a highly probable conjecture. Look at the circumstances. At a very early age young Quakers disappear, at a very early age the Coat-boys are seen ; at the age of seventeen or eighteen young Quakers are again seen ; at the same age,

the Coat-boys disappear: who has ever heard of the Coat-man? The thing is utterly unknown to natural history. Upon what other evidence does the migration of the grub into the aurelia rest? After a certain number of days the grub is no more seen, and the aurelia flutters over his relics. That such a prominent fact should have escaped our naturalists is truly astonishing; I had long suspected it, but was afraid to come out with a speculation so bold, and now mention it as protected and sanctioned by you.

"Dissection would throw great light upon the question; and if our friend —— would receive two boys into his house about the time of their changing their coats, great service would be rendered to the cause.

"Our friend Lord Grey, not remarkable for his attention to natural history, was a good deal struck with the novelty and ingenuity of the hypothesis. I have ascertained that the young Bluecoat infants are fed with drab-coloured pap, which looks very suspicious. More hereafter on this interesting subject. Where real science is to be promoted, I will make no apology to your Ladyship for this intrusion.—Yours truly, SYDNEY SMITH"

"Infectious" I have called Smith's fun, and it seems to have been literally so, as his letter produced an equally good epistle from Lady Morley:—

"Had I received your letter two days since, I should have said your arguments and theory were perfectly convincing, and that the most obstinate sceptic must have yielded to them; but I have come across a person in that interval who gives me information which puts us all at sea again. That the Bluecoat boy should be the larva of the Quaker in Great Britain is possible, and even pro-

bable ; and here, I confess, I am bewildered by doubts and difficulties. The Bluecoat is an indigenous animal—not so the Quaker ; and now be so good as to give your whole mind to the facts I have to communicate. I have seen and talked much with Sir R. Kerr Porter on this interesting subject. He has travelled over the whole habitable globe, and has penetrated with a scientific and scrutinizing eye into regions hitherto unexplored by civilized man ; and yet *he* has never seen a Quaker baby. He has lived for years in Philadelphia (the national nest of Quakers) ; he has roamed up and down Broadways and lengthways in every nook and corner of Pennsylvania ; and he never saw a Quaker baby ; and what is new and most striking, never did he see a Quaker lady in a situation which gave hope that a Quaker baby might be seen hereafter. This is a stunning fact, and involving the question in such impenetrable mystery as will, I fear, defy even your sagacity, acuteness, and industry to elucidate. But let us not be checked and cast down ; truth is the end and object of our research. Let us not bate one joy of heart and hope, but still bear up and steer our course right onward.—Yours most truly, F. Morley "

These two letters give a far better idea of Sydney Smith's overpowering fun than do most of the short detached jokes, good as they are. We can imagine from this tract on the Bluecoat, how irresistible he must have been when he was once started on a fruitful idea. Had modern journalism existed, no doubt he would have written his jests ; and we should have volumes of reprinted causeries from Peter Pith.

This is how he wrote to the autocrat of Holland House (in 1811) : he had overcome his nervousness !

"81 Jermyn Street, 23 *May* 1811.

"How very odd, dear Lady Holland, to ask me to dine with you on Sunday, the 9th, when I am coming to stay with you from the 5th to the 12th! It is like giving a gentleman an assignation for Wednesday, when you are going to marry him on the preceding Sunday,—an attempt to combine the stimulus of gallantry with the security of connubial relations. I do not propose to be guilty of the slightest infidelity to you while I am at Holland House, except you dine in town; and then it will not be infidelity but spirited recrimination.—Ever the sincere and affectionate friend of Lady Holland, Sydney Smith"

Some of the best hits in the letters are at the expense of Luttrell, that confirmed Londoner:—

"Luttrell came over for a day, from whence I know not, but I thought not from good pastures; at least, he had not his usual soup-and-pattie look. There was a forced smile upon his countenance which seemed to indicate plain roast and boiled; and a sort of apple-pudding depression, as if he had been staying with a clergyman."

"Luttrell came over for the day; he was very agreeable, but spoke too lightly, I thought, of veal soup. I took him aside, and reasoned the matter with him, but in vain; to speak the truth, Luttrell is not steady in his judgments on dishes. Individual failures with him soon degenerate into generic objections, till, by some fortunate accident, he eats himself into better opinions. A person of more calm reflection thinks not only of what he is consuming at that moment, but of the soups of the same kind he has met with in a long course of dining, and which have gradually and justly elevated the species. I am perhaps

making too much of this; but the failures of a man of sense are always painful."

Unlike many jesters, Sydney Smith was at his wittiest in sustained passages. He needed space and time to do his best, and when he did do his best, there were none who could beat him, and none who could resist him. Moore was determined to withstand but failed and became an enthusiastic admirer; Mrs. Siddons, as I have said, in trying to keep her gravity nearly went into a fit. There is no truth in Macaulay's statement that he and Rogers hated each other; and little evidence that any one was ever jealous, or ever remained jealous of Sydney Smith. Rogers said that when the conversation was getting dull, Sydney always put in a touch that made it light again, and to the end of his life he told some of the most familiar Smith stories.

What constitutes the charm of Sydney Smith's humour is that it reflects, not his acquirements, nor reading, but the whole sunny nature of the man. It has a spontaneity which is more precious than any amount of ingenious but laboured trifling; beside it Luttrell's seems thin, and Rogers over-acid; and it is no little to its recommendation that Smith's wit left the hearers and leaves the reader in a good temper with themselves and the world.

What is perhaps most striking to a modern reader of Sydney Smith's *Edinburgh Review* essays is the real Radicalism of their standpoint. Here we have a man, generally and rightly regarded as one of the most typical Englishmen of his time, attacking time-honoured institutions with a vigour, a full-blooded force that is generally only used by the stout country squires who defend them. Here is no sardonic, thin-lipped, anæmic philosopher, but a man of blustering good sense and terrific humour, the

foe of cant (so much its foe that he fails to see the good in Methodism or the splendid courage of a Carey), the enemy of humbug—and he is anti-sport, anti-public-school, anti-wine, anti-war.

Of his antipathy to war I have already spoken. He is as emphatic as Tolstoy. His views on "drinking" were equally unfashionable. As early as 1814 he writes to Lady Holland: "I liked London better than I ever liked it before, and simply, I believe, from water-drinking. Without this, London is stupefaction and inflammation. . . . All people above the condition of labourers are ruined by excess of stimulus and nourishment, clergy included. I never yet saw any gentleman who drank as little as was reasonable." Here Smith must have forgotten Rogers, to whose notorious abstemiousness he elsewhere pays tribute.

It would be a good thing if Smith's essay on public schools were reprinted and sent to every parent, together with that most admirable paper, one of three on Fallacies.

"Fallacy I. Because I have gone through it, my son shall go through it also.

"A man gets well pummelled at a public school; is subject to every misery and indignity which seventeen years of age can inflict upon nine or ten; has his eye nearly knocked out, and his clothes stolen and cut to pieces; and twenty years afterwards, when he is a chrysalis, and has forgotten the miseries of his grub state, is determined to act a manly part in life and says, 'I passed through all that myself, and I am determined my son shall pass through it as I have done;' and away goes his bleating progeny to the tyranny and servitude of the long chamber or the large dormitory. It would surely be much more natural to say, 'Because I have passed through it, I am determined my son shall not pass through it; because I was kicked

for nothing, and cuffed for nothing, and fagged for nothing, I will spare all those miseries to my child.' It is not from any good that may be derived from this rough usage ; that has not been weighed and considered ; few persons are capable of weighing its effects upon character ; but there is a sort of compensating and consolatory notion, that the present generation (whether useful or not, no matter) are not to come off scot-free, but are to have their share of ill-usage ; as if the black eye and bloody nose which Master John Jackson received in 1800 are less black and bloody by the application of similar violence to similar parts of Master Thomas Jackson, the son, in 1830. This is not only sad nonsense, but cruel nonsense."

This is not the writing of a modern educational faddist, but of a man who had passed through the ordinary public school, and had too much sense to be led away by foolish talk of *esprit de corps*, and so be prevented from telling the truth about a barbarous system. In his Essay on Public Schools he discusses English education and the public school in their more general aspects, and his sane summing up in favour of an education " which mingles a domestic with a school life," has never been answered. Certainly it is no answer to point out the improvements, willingly admitted by all, in the conduct of public schools since Smith's time. There is no answer that can be made which would effectively dispose of his main argument against the vices and dangers that are inseparable from a large, unnatural aggregate of boys who must be allowed to form their own standards of morality and honour, and who will force those standards on any protesting minority. That is the real crux of the public-school system ; so long as boy rules boy, so long will you have organized societies where unlimited cruelty, bullying, mental torture and debased vice are

always possible, and too frequently are actually in existence.

As a specimen of the pungent nature of Sydney Smith's polemical writing, I don't know that you can better the essay on "The Society for the Suppression of Vice." It deals with a Society that existed—may still exist, for all I know—to prevent bear-baiting, bull-baiting, and low gambling-houses frequented by the poor. This is how Smith deals with the Society:—

"Nothing has disgusted us so much in the proceedings of this Society, as the control which they exercise over the amusements of the poor. One of the specious titles under which this legal meanness is gratified is, *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.*

"Of cruelty to animals, let the reader take the following specimens:—

"Running an iron hook in the intestines of an animal; presenting this first animal to another as his food; and then pulling this second creature up and suspending him by the barb in his stomach.

"Riding a horse till he drops, in order to see an innocent animal torn to pieces by dogs.

"Keeping a poor animal upright for many weeks, to communicate a peculiar hardness to his flesh.

"Making deep incisions into the flesh of another animal while living, in order to make the muscles more firm.

"Immersing another animal, while living, in hot water.

"Now we do fairly admit, that such abominable cruelties as these are worthy of the interference of the law; and that the Society should have punished them, cannot be matter of surprise to any feeling mind.—But stop, gentle reader! these cruelties are the cruelties of the Suppressing Committee, not of the poor. You must not think of punishing

these.—The first of these cruelties passes under the pretty name of *angling ;*—and therefore there can be no harm in it —the more particularly as the President himself has one of the best preserved trout streams in England.—The next is *hunting ;*[1]—and as many of the Vice-Presidents and of the Committee hunt, it is not possible there can be any cruelty in hunting. The next is, a process for making *brawn*—a dish never tasted by the poor, and therefore not to be disturbed by indictment. The fourth is the mode of *crimping* cod ; and the fifth, of boiling lobsters ; all high-life cruelties, with which a justice of the peace has no business to meddle. The real thing which calls forth the sympathies, and harrows up the soul, is to see a number of boisterous artisans baiting a bull, or a bear ; not a savage hare, or a carnivorous stag,—but a poor, innocent, timid bear ;—not pursued by magistrates, and deputy lieutenants, and men of education,—but by those who must necessarily seek their relaxation in noise and tumultuous merriment,—by men whose feelings are blunted, and whose understanding is wholly devoid of refinement.

" It is not true, as urged by the Society, that the vices of the poor are carried on in houses of public resort, and those of the rich in their own houses. The Society cannot be ignorant of the innumerable gambling-houses resorted to by men of fashion. Is there one they have suppressed, or attempted to suppress ? Can anything be more despi-

[1] " How reasonable creatures," says the Society, " can enjoy a pastime which is the cause of such sufferings to brute animals, or how they can consider themselves entitled, for their own amusement, to stimulate those animals, by means of the antipathies which Providence has thought proper to place between them, to worry and tear, and often to destroy each other, it is difficult to conceive. So inhuman a practice, by a retribution peculiarly just, tends obviously to render the human character brutal and ferocious," &c. &c. (*Address*, pp. 71, 72.) We take it for granted, that the reader sees clearly that no part of this description can possibly apply to the case of *hunting*.

cable than such distinctions as these? Those who make them seem to have for other persons' vices all the rigour of the ancient Puritans—without a particle of their honesty or their courage. To suppose that any society will ever attack the vices of people of fashion, is wholly out of the question. If the Society consisted of tradesmen, they would infallibly be turned off by the vicious customers whose pleasures they interrupted; and what gentleman so fond of suppressing, as to interfere with the vices of good company, and inform against persons who were really genteel? He knows very well that the consequence of such interference would be a complete exclusion from elegant society; that the upper classes could not, and would not, endure it; and that he must immediately lose his rank in the world, if his zeal subjected fashionable offenders to the slightest inconvenience from the law. Nothing, therefore, remains, but to rage against the Sunday dinners of the poor, and to prevent a bricklayer's labourer from losing, on the seventh day, that beard which has been augmenting the other six. We see at the head of this Society the names of several noblemen, and of other persons moving in the fashionable world. Is it possible they can be ignorant of the innumerable offences against the law and morality which are committed by their own acquaintances and connections? Is there one single instance where they have directed the attention of the Society to this higher species of suppression, and sacrificed men of consideration to that zeal for virtue which watches so acutely over the vices of the poor? It would give us very little pleasure to see a duchess sent to the Poultry Compter; but if we saw the Society flying at such high game, we would at least say they were honest and courageous, whatever judgment we might form of their good sense. At present

they should denominate themselves a Society for suppressing the vices of persons whose income does not exceed £500 *per annum;* and then, to put all classes upon an equal footing, there must be another society of barbers, butchers, and bakers, to return to the higher classes that moral character, by which they are so highly benefited."

Some of the fun may seem a little heavy to-day, but that is a question of fashion in laughter-making which should not let us miss the real, barbed efficacy of such honest ridicule as this. The sound common-sense of his protest against this gross class-persecution remains as valid to-day as then; and his principles might be recited daily to those "liberal" politicians who prefer to leave the public-house so vile a place that no child can enter one, instead of seeking to cleanse and reform, and to restore that great institution, the English inn.

Of Smith's friendship to Rogers there is no need to say more. I have already commented on the absurdity of Macaulay's "hating each other." Smith did not hate the man, of whom he could say, "Next to the Congreve rocket he is the most mischievous of modern inventions;" or in serious mood to Lady Holland: "I think you very fortunate in having Rogers at Rome. Show me a more kind and friendly man; secondly, one from good manners, knowledge, fun, taste, and observation, more agreeable; thirdly, a man of more strict political integrity, and of better character in private life. If I were to choose any Englishman in foreign parts whom I should wish to blunder upon, it should be Rogers."

It is a quaint touch that, congratulating Lady Holland on finding a good Whig to go about with. Yet in this earnestness, this deliberate fusion of political and moral right, did not there lie a great deal of the strength of the

politicians of 1800 to 1854. To-day we hold our convictions more lightly, we have made ourselves indifferent and call it tolerance ; we seek ease and expediency and flatter ourselves on our practical ability to come to terms with our opponents. We need more vigour, more convinced sincerity in our politics, and if we seek somewhere for inspiration we can find it in Byron and in Fox—and, if we need it to persuade the masses, to preach to the people, in the writings of Sydney Smith.

CHAPTER XII

RICHARD PORSON AND OTHERS

IN a good many excellent anecdotes Rogers preserved for his friends—and for us—some of the more startling differences between the times of his youth and of his old age. It seems that such a story as this must be true of another country than ours :—

" When I was a lad, I recollect seeing a whole cartful of young girls, in dresses of various colours, on their way to be executed at Tyburn. They had all been condemned, on one indictment, for having been concerned in (that is, perhaps, for having been spectators of) the burning of some houses during Lord George Gordon's riots. It was quite horrible.—Greville was present at one of the trials consequent on those riots, and heard several boys sentenced, to their own excessive amazement, to be hanged. ' Never,' said Greville, with great *naïveté*, ' did I see boys *cry* so.' "

It is easy to denounce our present age for humanitarianism, and to praise " The Merry Past " ; but it is difficult to state any price which would be too great to pay to escape such a scene as that—children condemned by all the panoply of law, to suffer death for the riots consequent on bigotry and besotted ignorance.

In lesser things fashions though changed are perhaps no less ridiculous to-day. Who are we, with our " cart-wheel " hats, that can only just be got into a cab, to mock at these good women of whom Rogers narrates : " The head-dresses of the ladies, during my youth, were of a truly

preposterous size. I have gone to Ranelagh in a coach with a lady who was obliged to sit upon a stool placed at the bottom of the coach, the height of her head-dress not allowing her to occupy the regular seat." And I don't suppose but that many a modern parallel could be found to this incident of the last decade of the eighteenth century: "Their tight-lacing was equally absurd. Lady Crewe told me that, on returning home from Ranelagh, she has rushed up to her bedroom, and desired her maid to cut her laces without a moment's delay, 'for fear she should faint.'"

The duel, though not dead, was getting near its end, when Rogers was a young man. Such an event as this would not be possible in an age that still took entirely seriously that curious method of settling questions of honour:—

"A certain man of pleasure about London received a challenge from a young gentleman of his acquaintance; and they met at the appointed place. Just before the signal for firing was given, the man of pleasure rushed up to his antagonist, embraced him, and vehemently protested that 'he could not lift his arm *against his own flesh and blood!*' The young gentleman, though he had never heard any imputation cast upon his mother's character, was so much staggered, that (as the ingenious man of pleasure had foreseen) no duel took place."

And although the device of Mr. Howarth, that Rogers also related, is not quite so sheer a piece of impudence, its success would be equally impossible in a really duelling age.

Humphrey Howarth, the surgeon, was called out, and made his appearance in the field stark naked, to the astonishment of the challenger, who asked him what he meant. "I know," said H., "that if any part of the clothing is

carried into the body by a gunshot wound, festering ensues ; and therefore I have met you thus." His antagonist declared, that fighting with a man *in puris naturalibus* would be quite ridiculous ; and accordingly they parted without further discussion.

Of course it may be argued duelling was a check on the brutality of public life. A man thought twice before making an insolent remark, if he knew he could be asked to account for it at twenty paces length. But, if this argument is sound, its upholders should be able to show that brutality in public life has increased ; and the contrary is notoriously the case. Even before Rogers died, the change was already noticeable. He refers, for instance, to the improvement of manners in the House. In his youth he said Lord North once complained, in a speech, of " the brutal language " which Colonel Barré had used towards him ; General Tarleton, not indeed in the House, but in private among his own party, said that " he was *glad to see* Fox's legs swelled." It would be quite impossible to-day for a political opponent to make so atrocious a comment on another politician's physical ills.

Ordinary social life was also far " rowdier " than even the smartest of our smart sets. George IV. was always a cad, but even for him this treatment of a woman at a public function seems a little extreme : " Lady Salisbury never had any pretensions to beauty. In her youth she was dancing in a country-dance with the Prince of Wales at a ball given by the Duchess of Devonshire, when the Prince suddenly quitted Lady Salisbury, and finished the dance with the Duchess." It is true that great freedom was used towards Royalty—a tradition that survived from the Stuart period—but it was the freedom of boors rather than of gentlemen. There was a certain Major Price, whom

Rogers said had a great reputation for bluntness of speech, which he exercised on the king and others. "When the Duke of Clarence (William the Fourth) was a very young man, he happened to be dining at the Equerries' table. Among the company was Major Price. The Duke told one of his facetious stories. 'Excellent!' said Price; 'I wish I could believe it.'—'If you say that again, Price,' cried the Duke, 'I'll send this claret at your head.' Price *did* say it again. Accordingly the claret *came*,—and it was *returned*.—I had this from Lord St. Helens, who was one of the party." The stiffness of the Victorian Court was, no doubt, distressingly tedious; and put England on a level with those wretched German princelingdoms, where there is nothing to keep up but dignity. Still, almost any amount of stiff, ceremonial etiquette would be preferable to this bear-garden folly.

The follies of mankind—or of the more foolish section of mankind—do not change so rapidly or so thoroughly as their manners. In Rogers' early days, as now, there flourished the aristocratic crank, patron of strange religions and of strange animals. So long as we support a class, which can, if it pleases, occupy itself industriously with idleness, so long shall we have the follies consequent on unintelligent idleness, or misdirected energies. All that this gentleman wanted was probably something useful to do; "Archibald Hamilton, afterwards Duke of Hamilton (as his daughter, Lady Dunmore, told me) advertised for 'a Hermit' as an ornament to his pleasure grounds; and it was stipulated that the said Hermit should have his beard shaved but once a year and that only partially.

"A friend, calling on him one forenoon, asked if it was true that he kept a young tame tiger. He immediately slapped his thighs and uttered a sort of whistle; and forth

crept the long-backed animal from under the sofa. The visitor soon retreated."

In Rogers' time, as in ours, the motives of His Majesty's Government in bestowing benefits on His Majesty's loyal servants were not entirely above suspicion. There are ingenuous folk who still wonder all their political loyalty goes unrewarded; and others whose faithfulness to the proper shibboleth is by no means so secure, get the places that are vacant, or even have vacancies made. Most politicians of to-day could echo Rogers' taunt: "Places are given away by Government as often for the sake of silencing animosity as in the hope of assistance from the parties benefited." And does not this little story remind us of many modern bazaars or private concerts, or "subscription" books?

"When titled ladies become authoresses or composers, their friends suffer for it. Lady —— asked me to buy her book; and I replied that I would do so when I was rich enough. I went to a concert at Lady ——'s, during which several pieces composed by her daughter were performed; and early next morning a music-seller arrived at my house, bringing with him the daughter's compositions (and a bill receipted), price sixteen shillings."

That receipted bill yet travels about the streets of London, entering the houses of the unwary and the charitable, and few there be who have the courage to refuse it.

Nor should I like to say to how many modern publishers this might seem appropriate:—

"Lane made a large fortune by the immense quantity of trashy novels which he sent forth from his Minerva-press. I perfectly well remember the splendid carriage in which he used to ride, and his footmen with their cockades and gold-headed canes.

"Nowadays, as soon as a novel has had its run, and

is beginning to be forgotten, out comes an edition of it as a ' standard novel ! ' "

To the student of manners few things are so entrancing a subject as changes in pronunciation. Every one remembers (or should) the accent given to " balcony " in *In Memoriam*, and I know many people, I am glad to say, who still talk of " contráry " and " revénue." Rogers has a good little note on this question :—

" It is curious how fashion changes pronunciation. In my youth everybody said ' Lonnon,' not ' London ' : Fox said ' Lonnon ' to the last : and so did Crowe. The now fashionable pronunciation of several words is to me at least very offensive : ' cóntemplate ' is bad enough ; but ' bálcony ' makes me sick."

It is almost certain, I should think, that, as did Savage Landor, the author of *Italy* spoke of " Room " for Rome ; and he may have said " laylac " and " goold." " Tay," I fancy, went out before his time, in spite of the encouragement given by the rime in the *Rape of the Lock* (obey : tea) ; and I am not sure to what extent, outside the poems of the old Evangelicals, such unpleasant cacophonies as " jine " lasted into the Georgian era. But Henry Irving always pronounced the " a " in gape (who can forget his " ga-a-aping pig " ?) like that in " father " ; and gave the full value to the Greek long " e " in " blasphemous " and " blasphemy." There ought to be a small society for the preservation of decent English pronunciation—to protest against the slovenly custom that pushes back the accent on words when all tradition and etymology and—in many cases—the mere sound of the word—demands the old and original pronunciation. The pulpit has long ceased to be a safe criterion in this matter ; and the stage is rapidly going the same way ; and all we have to avert disaster is

the rampart of Lady Grove, with her attack on those who sound " mid-verbal " " h's."

While in many things it must regretfully be decided that we have not advanced much since Rogers first went into London society, there is one matter in which the improvement is enormous. It is not to-day customary for an English gentleman to get drunk after dinner; it is not to-day a mark of extreme peculiarity to refuse to drink beer or wine or spirits; it is not to-day usual to overlook offences because they are aggravated (or extenuated) by drunkenness. Yet in Rogers' time, and certainly up to the end of William IV.'s reign, if not afterwards, any reference to drunkenness as other than a venial fault—sad if carried to excess as by Sheridan in later life, or by Porson all his life—would have marked the speaker off as " crank " definitely and irretrievably. Of Rogers' intimate companions I do not suppose there were any who did not, at times, exceed; whilst some, as we know, were rarely, if ever, quite sober. Of the actual Court circle we have a sufficiently true picture—despite later attempts at whitewashing—in Thackeray's *Four Georges*, that candid return to the frank way of treating royalty; and no doubt the Whigs suffered in this respect, as in so many others, from their disastrous friendship with the Regent, that blackguard, flashy Absalom to how poor a David! Still it rather surprises one to find Sydney Smith writing to Lady Holland advising her to persuade Lord Holland to take less wine—not that he exceeded, but still Smith thought he would be in better health with less. Rogers himself, we learn from the same letter, at this time took no wine; and Sharp practised the same abstinence; but this seems to have been most unusual. Certainly even Rogers does

not appear to have deprecated the prevailing drunkenness with any severity; and he tells a story which shows us how far manners have altered in this respect:—

"Doctor Fordyce sometimes drank a good deal at dinner. He was summoned one evening to see a lady patient, when he was more than half-seas-over, and conscious that he was so. Feeling her pulse, and finding himself unable to count its beats, he muttered, 'Drunk, by God!' Next morning, recollecting the circumstance, he was greatly vexed; and just as he was thinking what explanation of his behaviour he should offer to the lady, a letter from her was put into his hand. 'She too well knew,' said the letter, 'that he had discovered the unfortunate condition in which she was when he last visited her; and she entreated him to keep the matter secret in consideration of the enclosed (a hundred pound bank-note).'"

What is even more significant in this anecdote than the fact of the drunkenness is the patient's notion that the doctor might gossip about her condition. Medical etiquette may be rigid, and at times rather ridiculously so; but I cannot imagine any modern doctor with a reputation to lose chattering about a drunken patient.

It is not, however, the mere drunkenness and its frequency which is so amazing to a modern reader: it is the light in which the habit was regarded. Nothing perhaps is a better example of the more shameless side of this aspect of the question than the life of that great scholar, Richard Porson. Porson was a great friend of Rogers, and had an even closer acquaintance with William Maltby, Rogers' old schoolfellow; and Porson was, in modern language, a hopeless dipsomaniac.

Whether he was a greater scholar than Bentley may be doubted; but he was certainly more brilliant, and he had

a better æsthetic taste than the man who could produce that ill-starred edition of Milton. He could have done anything in Greek scholarship, and virtually all that is left us is the edition of Euripides, of Æschylus, a few lectures, and the smashing answer to Travis on the gloss of *The Three Witnesses*. He must have begun to drink fairly early in life, for he lost one of his first appointments, a tutorship to a youth in the Isle of Wight, because he was found dead drunk in a turnip field. Of course there are such afflicted people as dipsomaniac scholars to-day; but their friends (or acquaintances) don't encourage them to get drunk. There is no evidence that Porson could not have been cured; Rogers managed, even when he was old and settled in the habit, to keep him in bounds at his dinner-table and send him home sober; but no one else did anything, except an early patron who apparently took too haughty a tone with Porson, who was as sensitive as all confirmed drunkards are, and so earned the scholar's displeasure and lost his friendship. How most of Porson's friends took his habit may be judged from Horne Tooke's behaviour. For the time Horne Tooke was a decent person: his ideas were in advance of his day, and he had a real liberality of thought. Porson was a friend of Tooke's, and they were on sufficiently intimate terms to be rather rude to one another. It is recorded in Tooke's life that on one occasion when Porson annoyed him extremely, *he silenced and triumphed over him by making him dead drunk with brandy*. This was done by a man who was perfectly familiar with Porson's disease, and with the injury it was doing to his career and his life; and yet he is capable of behaving like the drink-sodden wastrels in South Africa, where, when a man has got dead drunk, his companions heave him on a bed and pour the liquor down his throat,

expectant of similar treatment in their own extremity. That Porson's case was a disease is acknowledged in Tooke's own saying that "he would drink ink, if he could get nothing else"; and the following story is vouched for by William Maltby.

When Hoppner the painter was residing in a cottage a few miles from London, Porson, one afternoon, unexpectedly arrived there. Hoppner said that he could not offer him dinner, as Mrs. H. had gone to town, and had carried with her the key of the closet which contained the wine. Porson, however, declared that he would be content with a mutton chop and beer from the next alehouse; and accordingly stayed to dine. During the evening Porson said, "I am quite certain that Mrs. Hoppner keeps some nice bottle, for her private drinking, in her own bedroom; so, pray, try if you can lay your hands on it." His host assured him that Mrs. H. had no such secret stores; but Porson insisting that a search should be made, a bottle was at last discovered in the lady's apartment, to the surprise of Hoppner, and the joy of Porson, who soon finished its contents, pronouncing it to be the best gin he had tasted for a long time. Next day, Hoppner, somewhat out of temper, informed his wife that Porson had drunk every drop of her concealed dram. "Drunk every drop of it!" cried she; "my God, it was spirits of wine for the lamp!" While Rogers vouches for the horrible legend that after a dinner-party, when the men had left the table, Porson would return and creep round the table taking up every glass. He would empty all the dregs into one tumbler, and then drink up the mixture.

I have told enough, I think, to make the modern reader realize what a gulf separates "the polite society" of that age from to-day; and I cannot believe that any one

seriously thinks the tone of the Georgian era about drink was better, more manly than ours, even though we do suffer at times from the extreme ardour of certain teetotallers.

Porson, besides being a great Greek scholar, was a very pretty wit. He is the author of one of the best Latin puns in existence. Once asked in an examination paper, "Whether Brutus did right to assassinate Cæsar?" he replied, "Non bene fecit, nec male fecit; sed interfecit." Byron has handed down another of his sayings (not improved in the process) in his notes on *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*: "*Madoc* will be read,—when Homer and Virgil are forgotten."

He had a good deal of feeling for English as well as for Greek poetry, and damned the poetasters who flourished in his time in a pleasant enough epigram:—

> "Poetis *non* laetamur tribus,
> Pye, Petro Pindar, parvo Pybus;
> Si ulterius ire pergis,
> Adde his Sir James Bland Burges."

Rogers gives in his *Recollections* a good brief account of Porson's early life, communicated to him by Porson himself.

"He is not more remarkable for his learning, than for acuteness and correctness of thought. Through his whole life, whether in his morning or his evening hours, he has never been heard to utter a mean or licentious sentiment. He came to town with nothing but his fellowship to support him;[1] and that was soon to expire, in consequence of his refusal to enter the Church. A Lay-fellowship fell vacant. He applied for it to Dr. Postlethwaite, the Master of Trinity; but was civilly refused. Another offered itself, and again

[1] He was a member of Trinity College, Cambridge, where he obtained a fellowship in 1781, and took the degree of M.A. in 1785.

he applied by letter, but with the same success. The Master had again promised it to a young relation, whose fellowship was not within *three* years of its expiration; and he said: 'I now found myself a private gentleman, with no visible means of support, and with nothing but my animal spirits to feed and clothe me.' Two thousand pounds had been expended on his education; but he had now nothing. By his letters to Travis[1] he had earned only thirty pounds. A copy was sold at Farmer's sale—he never ventured to ask the price it fetched, but often mentioned it with some degree of anxiety; and observed that if it often passed under the hammer at a low rate, he should become the constant purchaser, and consign it to the fire.

"When Dr. Postlethwaite came to town, to attend the Westminster Examination, Porson called upon him. 'I am come, Sir, to inform you that my fellowship will become vacant in a few weeks, in order that you may appoint my successor.' 'But, Mr. Porson, you do not mean to leave us?' 'It is not I who leave you, but you who dismiss me. You have done me every injury in your power. But I am not come to complain or expostulate.' 'I did not know, Mr. Porson, you were so resolved.' 'You could not conceive, Sir, that I could have applied for a Lay-fellowship to the detriment of some more scrupulous man, if it had been my intention to take orders.'

"In September 1792, the Greek Professorship[2] fell vacant, and Dr. Postlethwaite wrote to acquaint Porson with the circumstance. He returned the following answer:—

"'SIR,—When I first received the favour of your letter, I must own that I felt rather vexation and chagrin, than

[1] Letters to Archdeacon Travis in answer to his defence of 1 John v. 7.

[2] Porson was elected Greek Professor at the University of Cambridge in 1793.

hope and satisfaction. I had looked upon myself so completely in the light of an outcast from Alma Mater, that I had made up my mind to have no further connection with the place. The prospect you held out to me gave me more uneasiness than pleasure. When I was younger than I now am, and my disposition more sanguine than it is at present, I was in daily expectation of Mr. Cooke's resignation, and I flattered myself with the hope of succeeding to the honour he was going to quit. As hope and ambition are great castle-builders, I had laid a scheme, partly, as I was willing to think, for the joint credit, partly for the mutual advantage, of myself and the University. I had projected a plan of reading lectures, and I persuaded myself that I should easily obtain a grace, permitting me to exact a certain sum from every person who attended. But seven years' waiting will tire out even the most patient temper; and all my ambition of this sort was long ago laid asleep. The sudden news of the vacant Professorship put me in mind of poor Jacob, who, having served seven years in hopes of being rewarded with Rachel, awoke, and behold it was Leah. Such, Sir, I confess, were the first ideas that took possession of my mind. But after a little reflection, I resolved to refer a matter of this importance to my friends. This circumstance has caused the delay, for which I ought before now to have apologized. My friends unanimously exhorted me to embrace the good fortune, which they conceived to be within my grasp. Their advice, therefore, joined to the expectations I had entertained of doing some small good by my exertions in the employment, together with the pardonable vanity which the honour annexed to the office inspired, determined me; and I was on the point of troubling you, Sir, and the other Electors with notice of my intentions to profess myself a Candidate, when an

objection which had escaped me in the hurry of my thoughts, now occured to my recollection.

"'The same reason which hindered me from keeping my fellowship by the method you obligingly pointed out to me, would, I am greatly afraid, prevent me from being Greek Professor. Whatever concern this may give me for myself, it gives me none for the public. I trust there are, at least, twenty or thirty in the University, equally able and willing to undertake the office, possessed of talents superior to mine, and all of a more complying conscience. This I speak upon the supposition, that the next Greek Professor will be compelled to read lectures; but if the place remains a sinecure, the number of qualified persons will be greatly increased. And though it were even granted, that my industry and attention might possibly produce some benefit to the interest of learning and the credit of the University, that trifling gain would be as much exceeded by keeping the Professorship a sinecure, and bestowing it on a sound believer, as temporal considerations are outweighed by spiritual. Having only a strong persuasion, not an absolute certainty, that such a subscription is required of the Professor Elect, if I am mistaken, I hereby offer myself as a Candidate; but if I am right in my opinion, I shall beg of you to order my name to be erased from the boards, and I shall esteem it a favour conferred on, Sir, your obliged humble Servant,

R. Porson

"'Essex Court, 6 *October* 1792.'"

Cannot one read, both in the short periods of the sketch of his life, and the more vigorous wording of the letter, the proud, drunken, sordid scholar's accents? Full of shame for his vice, he is determined that none else shall shame him; and "this," he says, "is the kind of man I

was." The whole thing is pathetic beyond words. When he was elected Professor, what did he do? Delivered one preliminary lecture—and then, save for the editions of Æschylus in 1794, and of Euripides seven years later, silence, only broken by stories of his drunkenness. I suppose most Englishmen, outside the small circle interested in Biblical or Greek criticism, chiefly know of Porson (if they know of him at all) as the author of—

> "I went to Strasburg, and got drunk
> With that most learn'd professor Brunk;
> I went to Wurtz, and got more drunken
> With that more learned Professor Ruhnken."

It should be mentioned that Maltby was positive that Porson wrote a brochure that had some vogue (of a scandalous kind) in its day, *The Orgies of Bacchus*. The object of these letters was to establish a resemblance between the history of Our Lord and of Dionysos; and if Porson was the author, he may be claimed as one of the pioneers, though in somewhat fantastic fashion, of the study of comparative religions. A modern Christian, reasonably abreast of anthropological work, would not feel it necessary to draw the same conclusions as Porson apparently wished to be drawn—for Porson was unorthodox enough, though he refused to give his enemies a hold upon him by speaking out his mind on religion. Atheism would not be tolerated by a society which winked at his drinking habits.

Two years before his death he was appointed Librarian of the London Institute, a far better post than he had had before. But he was now long past the capacity for regular work. Maltby says that "he was very irregular in his attendance there; he never troubled himself about the purchase of books which ought to have been added to the

library ; and he would frequently come home dead-drunk long after midnight. I have good reason to believe that, had he lived, he would have been requested to give up the office,—in other words, he would have been dismissed. I once read a letter which he received from the Directors of the Institution, and which contained, among other severe things, this cutting remark—' We only know that you are our Librarian by seeing your name attached to the receipts for your salary.' His intimate friend, Dr. Raine, was one of those who signed that letter ; and Raine, speaking of it to me, said, ' Porson well deserved it.' As Librarian to the Institution, he had £200 a-year, apartments rent-free, and the use of a servant. Yet he was eternally railing at the Directors, calling them ' mercantile and mean beyond merchandize and meanness.' "

One of the few men whose talent Porson really appreciated was Gibbon ; and Gibbon gave him great pleasure by writing to him, after the publication of the *Letters to Travis,* and asking if he might make his acquaintance. Porson called ; but the acquaintance never grew into a friendship. Although he always spoke of *The Decline and Fall* as " beyond all comparison the greatest literary production of the eighteenth century," he also said that " there could not be a better exercise for a schoolboy than to turn a page of it into *English.*"

In spite of his faults, his drunkenness, his arrogance, his astonishing capacity for sitting up three or four nights (and keeping his friends up as well), Porson had many who were proud to call him friend, and quick to defend his character. Jacob Bryant, a forgotten scholar from most of whose opinions Porson differed, was once violently attacking him in a mixed company which included Dr. Douglas, Bishop of Salisbury. The Bishop turned and

said to him: "Mr. Bryant, you are speaking of a great man; and you should remember, Sir, that even the greatest men are not without their failings." Rogers always insisted on "the integrity of his character"; and had a high opinion of his general intellectual power. That, perhaps, is the most striking contrast between him and most modern scholars. Too often our great Greek or Latin scholars have little interest or knowledge outside the range of their own subject: a man will devote his life to a couple of obscure authors, and spin fine-drawn distinctions on the textual difficulties of some scarcely existing poet of antiquity. In modern society or among modern questions he is lost. Porson could hold his own, not only with scholars, but with poets and men of the world; and no one was listened to more eagerly. It was Porson who originated that beautiful saying, "When Prometheus made man, he had used up all the water in making other animals; *so he mingled his clay with tears.*" And so far as I know, he was the first to be responsible for that acute gloss on the Unjust Steward's saying, "I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed"—"Who, from that day to this, has seen a Jew who was a beggar or an agriculturist?"

He died on 25 September 1808, within exactly three months of his forty-ninth year, and was buried in King's College Chapel.

There are a few other persons who either in actual date or in feeling belong so definitely to the eighteenth century that they must be mentioned before we pass to the last phase of Rogers' life, when he was slowly watching the sure advance of youth in the persons of such of his friends as Lamb, Dickens, and Macaulay.

Once he met that strange woman—so strange in her dullness, so incalculably fascinating in her beauty—who

lives for us by three things—by the pictures of Romney; by the broken sentences of Nelson, who left her to the country he saved; and by the dastardly behaviour of the English Government. "It was at a splendid party given by Lord Hampden to the Prince of Wales, &c., I saw Lady Hamilton go through all those 'attitudes' which have been engraved; and her performance was very beautiful indeed. Her husband, Sir William, was present."

Rogers also met Nelson; and he recalls of him that "he was a remarkably kind-hearted man. I have seen him spin a teetotum with his *one* hand, a whole evening, for the amusement of some children. I heard him once during dinner utter many bitter complaints (which Lady Hamilton vainly attempted to check) of the way he had been treated at Court that forenoon: the Queen had not condescended to take the slightest notice of him. In truth, Nelson was hated at Court; they were jealous of his fame.

"There was something very charming in Lady Hamilton's openness of manner. She showed me the neckcloth which Nelson had on when he died: of course, I could not help looking at it with extreme interest; and she threw her arms round my neck and kissed me.—She was latterly in great want, and Lord Stowell never rested till he procured for her a small pension from Government."

He used to tell a good story of Lord Chesterfield's, who, seeing two persons dancing a minuet, said of them that "they looked as if they had been hired to do it, and were doubtful of being paid."

There are only two recorded cases in which Rogers committed a *faux pas*—one was serious, and the other not. At Fox's house he once, quite forgetting the early history of Mrs. Armstead, began to praise Goldsmith's "When lovely woman stoops to folly." He realized what he was doing

when he perceived that Mrs. Fox (for she was then married) looked extremely confused and rather hurt. Rogers did not know what to say. It was hardly a slip for which one could apologize; but Fox, with his usual sense, solved the difficulty, by remarking carelessly, "Some people write damned nonsense."

The other incident I will let Rogers tell in his own words. It is a good story of that quaint sovereign the fourth William:—

"Once, when in company with William the Fourth, I quite forgot that it is against all etiquette to ask a sovereign about his health; and, on his saying to me, 'Mr. Rogers, I hope you are well,' I replied, 'Very well, I thank your majesty: *I trust that your majesty is quite well also.*' Never was a king in greater confusion; he didn't know where to look, and stammered out, 'Yes—yes—only a little rheumatism.'"

I will end this chapter with one of Rogers' favourite stories.

Once a quarrel arose between two men, a Frenchman and an Englishman. Honour was aggrieved, and had to be satisfied. They agreed that a duel should be fought in a room, with the lights out. The room was ready, and with the door securely shut the two combatants were ready. The Englishman was seized with qualms of humanity; he groped to the fireplace, and, firing up the chimney, brought down the Frenchman. . . . "When I tell that story in Paris," Rogers used to add, "it is the Englishman who is up the chimney."

CHAPTER XIII

THE REVIEWERS

THE most conspicuous, and by no means the least important literary event of the early nineteenth century, is the appearance of the *Edinburgh Review*, under the guidance of Jeffrey and Smith, and later, of the *Quarterly Review*, under Gifford. Nothing more surprises me than to hear elderly people, to-day, complain, as they do, about the prominence of journalism; about the hurried judgements, the hasty condemnations and the still hastier encomiums that are, they assume, characteristic of the present day only. Such talk argues the most astonishing ignorance of the early Quarterly Reviews. They, it is true, professed to be judicious; they had more time in which to review books; but he would be a bold man who would venture to uphold that the taint of journalism is less prominent in the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly* than it is in our present dailies and weeklies.

What we mean by the taint of journalism is, I presume, the judgement of literature or art or affairs from the standpoint of immediate prejudice. If a man, in criticizing poetry, refers not to the eternal standards of taste, the rules of æsthetics (whose authority has been misunderstood, in different ages, but has always been acknowledged to exist), but to the poet's politics, or manners, or profession; his taste in dress, or his views on monogamy, or on British morals, he is guilty of the sin of journalism. He is judging not merely by imperfect standards, but by

irrelevant standards : he is attempting to measure the god-like gift of poetry by a sieve, and all the fire and the rapture, the flame and the glory escape through the meshes ; and there remain—a few pebbles which, until the diligent sifting of the critic disclosed them, we hardly suspected of existing there at all.

Now to-day, in spite of the haste of daily papers, I believe that particular crime is uncommon ; it is certainly far more uncommon than it was in the old *Quarterlies*. Nothing is more usual than to find in a paper whose politics are Unionist, frank praise of books by and about Irish Nationalists ; the editor prides himself in the freedom from political bias of his literary columns. A reviewer of to-day who took, as did Jeffrey or Macaulay, the opportunity of chastising a political opponent by abusing his book in a literary article, would lose his job—and rightly. Yet this crime, that seems so heinous to us, does not appear to have revolted, as we should expect, the circle of Rogers and his friends. Rogers himself, it is true, objected to all anonymous criticism, and refused to have anything to do with the *Quarterly* for which his co-operation was asked ; all he ever did in the way of reviewing was to write part of an article praising Carey's *Dante* in the *Edinburgh*.

It was, however, the anonymity to which Rogers really objected : he does not seem to have protested against the wholly false standard of criticism which the Reviews encouraged and upheld. Is there any explanation of this general carelessness, this, to us, somewhat conscienceless carelessness of men otherwise honourable ? The chief reason for it is, I believe, that literature was regarded far more as an integral part of a man's life than it is at present ; it was not thought possible to separate a man's writing from the rest of his life, from his political and

social opinions. It is not that literature was regarded as a part of *Life*; that is, there was no tendency to correlate art with the other abiding things, the other real things of our existence; but there was a tendency to confuse art with the transient, the unimportant, and the less real machinery of existence. It is this which vitiates Southey's view of Byron, and inspired his horrible remark on Shelley, "When I had ceased to regard him with hope, he became to me an object for sorrow and awful commiseration;" it is this which makes the *Quarterly's* attacks on the Cockney school so hopelessly contemptible: even when the criticism, in detail, is just—as in a famous early review of Tennyson—it is in principle unsound. It is more concerned with artifice than with art; it reverses all the canons of sound criticism. Even Macaulay's chastisement of Montgomery, agree with much of it as we may, is radically unsound: it is unnecessary. Montgomery's poem is bad in itself, inconsistent and ridiculous, but there was no need for a serious critic to consider this. He need only have pointed out that the man's work was hopelessly out of tune with his themes, with the truth, and with the whole received body of Art.

The failure, on the other hand, of such a man as Jeffrey to appreciate Wordsworth is due to rather different reasons. The chief one is, I believe, possible to state simply that Jeffrey had no real conception of poetry at all. He was in the chains of the eighteenth century, and what he admired was not the poetry that pours out of Dryden, and sometimes breaks the fetters of Pope, but the wit, the verbal felicity, the keen sense, not for beauty, but for the appropriate, that marks the art of Pope. The difference between this and real poetry is enormous. Poetry is a lyrical surprise: it should evoke amazement, even more

than admiration. Whenever you open a poet you should open an apocalypse. It should not be appropriate to the circumstances: it should mould the circumstances, nay the reader's mind, into harmony with it. When Blake writes—

> "When the stars threw down their spears
> And watered heav'n with their tears,"

he has created something. The naked beauty of the image may astound, but we accept the beauty as we accept that of a beautiful woman, or of a sunrise. When we read in Pope—

> "Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
> And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer,"

we can say, how good, how admirably put! But we do not feel, here is something new, something to thank God for.

An even better illustration of this can be had, if we compare a passage where Blake is singularly simple with one of Pope's more "elevated" couplets. From that wonderful series of spiritual gnomic couplets which Blake left us, take—

> "A robin redbreast in a cage
> Puts all heav'n in a rage."

The language is familiar; the words simple; the statement plain to the verge of baldness; yet the whole idea has a poetic value, a spiritual truth that we look for in vain from Pope:—

> "Upon her breast a jewelled cross she wore
> Which Jews might kiss and infidels adore."

Nothing is lacking here except that transmuting touch which can turn the most commonplace things into a lyrical rapture. The beauty of Pope's couplet is undeniable, but

it is the beauty of skilful form ; it is comparable not with Blake or Keats or Shelley, but with Addison or Swift. It has added nothing to our experience ; it is instructive, declaratory, not prophetic—and when there is no vision, the poets perish.

Again if we take that chorus of Dryden's :—

"As from the power of sacred lays
The spheres began to move,
And sang the great Creator's praise
To all the blessed above ;
So when the last and dreadful hour
This crumbling pageant shall devour,
The trumpet shall be heard on high,
The dead shall live, the living die,
And Music shall untune the sky."

It is good ; but it is descriptive, not creative. How poor it seems beside "The morning stars sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for joy," or those old verses (which Dryden's last five lines intentionally recall) of Thomas of Celano :—

"Dies irae, dies illa
Solvet saeclum in favilla,
Teste David cum Sibylla.

. . . .

Tuba mirum spargens sonum
Per sepulcra regionum
Coget omnes ante thronum.

Mors stupebit, et natura,
Cum resurget creatura
Judicanti responsura."

True poetry, true art of any kind, is not a criticism of life. It is a mode of life, a fresh manifestation of life. The verse

of Pope is but a frame, often exquisitely beautiful, but still only a frame for the pageant-picture of life : in the poetry of Keats, of Wordsworth, of Shelley we have New Life, coming down from heaven. To this Gifford and Jeffrey were equally blind ; and would, probably, have gloried in their blindness. Jeffrey is reputed to have acknowledged that he was unfair to Lamb, and we know he repented of his attack on Moore ; but the shade of Keats never obtained the retractation that was his due, save from posterity that only remembers his antagonists because it was against Keats and Shelley that they fought.

The puzzle to me is that Rogers, in all his long friendship with Jeffrey, never succeeded in stopping some of that admirable person's extravagancies. Rogers was not only nearer the light than Jeffrey in his view of poetry ; but he was on intimate terms with Wordsworth, and, as we know, thought highly of his verse. He could say of the volume of 1842 (*Poems chiefly of early and late years*): "It is all gold. The least precious is still gold ;" and he was the only contemporary of the new era, save Byron, whom Rogers deigned to imitate. But he did not succeed, if he ever tried, in—I won't say converting—but in persuading Jeffrey to hold his tongue on matters where he was not qualified to speak. At a breakfast at Rogers in the summer of 1837, Crabb Robinson met Wordsworth, and had "a very interesting chat with him about his poetry." Empson, then editor of the *Edinburgh Review* (he wrote Jeffrey's life), was also present, and Crabb Robinson records that Empson related that "Jeffrey had lately told him that so many people had thought highly of Wordsworth, that he resolved to reperuse his poems, and see if he had anything to retract. Empson, I believe, did not end his anecdote ; he had before said to me that Jeffrey, having

done so, found nothing to retract, except, perhaps, a contemptuous and flippant phrase or two. Empson says he believed Jeffrey's distaste for Wordsworth to be honest—mere uncongeniality of mind. Talfourd, who is now going to pay Jeffrey a visit, says the same."

Surely it must at times have occurred to that Scotch brain that it was being put to uses for which it was scarcely constructed by its Maker; but if this is so, Jeffrey never allowed the suspicion to escape—in public.

Apart from his treatment of poetry, Jeffrey was one of the most pleasant and estimable of people. He was quite as ready to forgive as to give offence, as his long friendship with Moore shows; he once pleased the Irishman inordinately by hailing him as "the only vernal thing" he had seen for months. He was, too, a man of peculiar generosity; and when Moore was in financial trouble, he wrote a long letter to Rogers offering—although "I have, unfortunately, not a great deal of money to spare"—to take part in any subscription got up for Moore to the extent of £300 or £500; and double that, "upon any reasonable security of ultimate repayment, however long postponed."

When Jeffrey died, people forgot the truculence of his pen, and the unfair bitterness of his criticism; he benefited by that other note of journalism—his work was forgotten; and his friends only dwelt on the man's kindness and geniality.

It is easy to see why Macaulay's reviews have been granted a life that has been denied to the other old reviewers, even to Sydney Smith, whose art is not infrequently far more entertaining, and far fuller of solid criticism. First, there is the glitter of that unparalleled style which, while it so offends our taste, does catch and

hold the attention; second, the fact that the man who snarled at Croker and gobbled up Montgomery, was also the panegyrist of William III. and the glorious Revolution.

When Macaulay met Rogers, the poet was at the height of his social fame. He was the admired of Americans, and the sought after of young poets; and this position he retained during the fifteen years from 1830 to 1845. There are extant two excellent accounts of the kind of life he led during this period—one is Sir Henry Taylor's, and the other Charles Sumner's, the American statesman. Sir Henry Taylor's account is of an August evening spent at Rogers' in 1838; it is in a letter to Miss Fenwick.

"I have been . . . at two very small evening parties at Rogers'—only about fifteen persons. He is much oldened these last six months, having been very ill in the winter, and he has no longer the same vivacity of look that he had, not the same appearance of vigour. He talked very little, and was almost entirely occupied with the singing of his pet, Miss Jervis. But it was perhaps more interesting to see him with her, and her ways with him, than it would have been to hear him talk. To all appearance she is a gay, wild, vivacious girl, who cares for nobody and gives full scope to that unmodified naturalness of manner which, in society, amounts to a very considerable degree of eccentricity. . . . When she sat down to sing I thought there could not be a more formidable thing for a girl of three or four and twenty to undertake—a small room, and a small audience, and a dead silence; the Duke planted before the piano, Sir Robert Peel, Lord Aberdeen, and others, the gravest of men and statesmen, stopped short in their conversations; and old Rogers, well known to be at all times in agonies of anxiety as to everything *going off* well in his house. One might have been in a little agony

oneself *for her* if her face did not put one at ease. But she began without a shade of anxiety for herself, sang the first verse of her song, and then looked brightly over to the Duke and said: 'Do you like that?' and afterwards, when some one made her sing a song which she did not like herself, she seemed to have no difficulty in doing it, only saying, 'Now, Duke, you had better talk whilst I am singing this.'"

Who Miss Jervis was does not appear, nor do we meet her again in Rogers' life; but his preoccupation with his protégé's success shows his character in a most amiable light. Charles Sumner's account is that of a less familiar acquaintance, and it gives a very fair and unprejudiced picture of Rogers by one who was evidently prepared to dislike him. It occurs in a letter written to a friend in the January of 1839.

"I believe I have often written you about Rogers. Of course, I have seen him frequently in society, never did I like him till I enjoyed his kindness at breakfast. As a converser Rogers is unique. The world, or report, has not given him credit enough of his great and peculiar powers in this line. He is terse, epigrammatic, dry, infinitely to the point, full of wisdom, of sarcasm, and cold humour. He says the most ill-natured things, and does the best. He came up to me at Miss Martineau's, where there was a little party of very clever people, and said, 'Mr. Sumner, it is a great piece of benevolence in you to come here.' Determined not to be drawn into a slur upon my host, I replied, 'Yes, Mr. Rogers, of benevolence to myself.' As we were coming away, Mr. Rogers, Harness, Babbage, and myself were walking together down the narrow street in which Miss M. lives, when the poet said: 'Who but the Martineau could have drawn us into such a hole?'

And yet I doubt not he has a sincere liking for Miss M., for I have met her at his house, and he afterwards spoke of her with the greatest kindness. His various sayings that are reported about town, and his conversation as I caught it at evening parties, had impressed me with a great admiration of his powers, but with a positive dislike. I love frankness and truth. But his society at breakfast has almost obliterated my first impression. We were alone, and he showed all those wonderful paintings, and we talked till far into the afternoon. I have seldom enjoyed myself more ; it was a luxury, in such rooms, to listen to such a man, before whom the society of the last quarter of a century had passed—he alone unchanged ; to talk, with such a poet, of poetry and poets, of Wordsworth, and Southey, and Scott ; and to hear his opinions, which were given with a childlike simplicity and frankness. I must confess his great kindness to me. He asked my acceptance of the new edition of his poems, and said, 'I shall be happy to see any friend of yours, morning, noon, or night' ; and all his kindness was purely volunteer, for my acquaintance with him grew from simply meeting him in society. He inquired after Mrs. Newton with most friendly interest, and showed me a little present he had received from her, which he seemed to prize much. I shall write to her to let her know the good friends she has left behind. Rogers is a friend of Wordsworth, but thinks he has written too much, and without sufficient *limæ labor*. He says it takes him ten times as long to write a sentence of prose as it does Wordsworth one of poetry ; and in illustration, he showed me a thought in Wordsworth's last work—dedicated to Rogers—on the saying of the monk who had sat before the beautiful picture so long, and seen so many changes, that he felt tempted to say, 'We are the

shadows, and they the substance.'[1] This same story you will find in a note to the *Italy*. Rogers wrote his note ten times over before he was satisfied with it; Wordsworth's verse was published as it first left his pen. Look at the two."

The Rogers of these years is, too, the Rogers so famous and so dreaded as a wit. It is difficult to understand how Rogers earned his reputation as an extremely *unkind*, still less as a spiteful, jester. His jokes have none of the brutality of Hook's, nor his repartees the savage rage of Curran's, who once turned on a man and hoped "May God Almighty never humanize your countenance, you odious baboon." Perhaps we may find the secret of Rogers' reputation in an apothegm of his own. Once at a party, where there had been a great many people, he said: "There have been five separate parties, every one speaking *above* the pitch of his natural voice, and therefore there could be no kindness expressed, for kindness consists, not in what is said, but how it is said." He himself spoke in a very low voice. He told Sir Henry Taylor, "I have a very weak voice; if I did not say ill-natured things no one would hear what I said." Yet he employed his "ill-natured" wit mainly on those who deserved it. And even if he had a dig at his friends at times, Campbell said there was always an easy way to stop such strictures: "Borrow five hundred pounds of Rogers, and he will never say a word against you till you want to repay him"—and Campbell spoke from experience.

I will let the reader judge for himself how far Rogers was really bitter. He was in Turner's house one day, and was particularly struck by a beautiful table. "Wonderful," he said, "wonderful—but how much more wonderful it would be to see any of his friends sitting round it."

[1] *Yarrow Revisited, and other Poems*, 1835.

SAMUEL ROGERS

FROM AN ENGRAVING IN MACLISE'S "FRASER PORTRAITS"

It came to Landseer's knowledge that Rogers had praised the well-known "portrait" of a Newfoundland dog. When Landseer saw Rogers next, he told him how pleased he had been to hear of his praise.

"Yes, yes, I thought the ring of the dog's collar was well painted."

An author—that unfortunate author—presented Rogers with a copy of one of his books, that had been published by subscription. One day he was gratified to see the old connoisseur turning over the earlier pages of the volumes. "Ah, you're looking at the contents, Mr. Rogers?"

"No, the discontents," and pointed to the list of subscribers.

A bore, and a conceited bore, once tried to attach himself to Rogers and Hayward, when they were returning from an evening party. "I don't like walking alone," was his plea.

"I should have thought no one was so satisfied with your company as yourself," snapped the retort.

"It doesn't matter whom a man marries, he is sure to find the next morning he has married somebody else."

"You heard, I suppose, that P—— was stopped in Italy by brigands? They were going to carry him off, but his wife flung her arms round his neck, and sooner than take her with them, they let him go."

Lady Davy was one of Rogers' "most intimate enemies." One day she called to him across the dinner-table: "Mr. Rogers, I am sure you are talking some mischief about me." "Oh, Lady Davy, I spend my life in defending you."

"Such is the eagerness of the human mind for excitement—for *an event*—that people generally have a sort of satisfaction in reading the deaths of their friends in the

newspapers. I don't mean that a man would not be shocked to read there the death of his child or of his dearest friend ; but that he feels a kind of pleasure in reading that of an acquaintance, because it gives him something to talk about with everybody on whom he may have to call during the day.

" I once observed to a Scotch lady, ' How desirable it was in any danger *to have presence of mind.*' ' I had rather,' she rejoined, ' *have absence of body.*' "

A gentleman remarked that he did not like the new fashion of building churches with open seats instead of pews ; you might find yourself sitting next your coachman. " So you might in heaven," replied Rogers.

" Persons who marry and have families are exposed to many pains and cares that the single have not, but on the whole the balance is very much in their favour. A man is very silly to go through life and know nothing of the relations of a father and a husband.

" Frequently, when doubtful how to act in matters of importance, I have received more useful advice from women than from men. Women have the understanding *of the heart*, which is better than that of the head." Here, perhaps, we can trace the influence of Grattan, whose comparison of Fox and Pitt has been quoted.

It was Ward who once retorted on Rogers in his own decisive style. Rogers was lamenting how difficult it was to escape the penalties of fame. " For instance, last night directly I sat down to dinner, a girl turned and asked me if I was *the* Mr. Rogers, the poet ? " " And were you ? " queried Ward, with an expression of the greatest interest.

With the reputation that he possessed for destructive wit, it is not surprising that Rogers was not a little feared ;

and many, as did Ticknor, expressed their surprise, when they met the man, on "his kindness and charitableness"; and instead of assuming that the tradition was wrong, supposed either that Rogers was very gentle when they met him, or that they were particularly favoured.

This, of course, was the view taken by Macaulay, who has many references to Rogers—(mainly "views of Macaulay, taken with Rogers in the background")—in his letters of 1831 and succeeding years.

"Rogers and I sate together on a bench in one of the passages, and had a good deal of very pleasant conversation. He was—as, indeed, he has always been to me—extremely kind, and told me that if it were in his power he would contrive to be at Holland House with me, to give me an insight into its ways. He is the great oracle of that circle."

Again he writes that Rogers told him to write no more reviews but to publish separate works, "adding what, for him, is a very rare thing, a compliment: 'You may do anything, Mr. Macaulay.'"

. . . . . .

"Yesterday I dined at Marshall's, and was almost consoled for not meeting Rammohun Roy by a very pleasant party. The great sight was the two wits, Rogers and Sydney Smith. Singly I have often seen them, but to see them both together was a novelty, and a novelty not the less curious because their mutual hostility is well known, and the hard hits which they have given to each other are in everybody's mouth. They were civil, however. But I was struck by the truth of what Matthew Bramble, a person of whom you probably never heard, says in Smollett's *Humphry Clinker*, that one wit in a company, like a knuckle of ham in soup, gives a flavour; but two are

too many. Rogers and Sydney Smith would not come into conflict. If one had possession of the company the other was silent; and, as you may conceive, the one who had possession of the company was always Sydney Smith, and the one who was silent was always Rogers. Sometimes, however, the company divided, and each of them had a small congregation. I had a good deal of talk with both of them, for in whatever they may disagree, they agree in treating me with very marked kindness."

In a later letter he gives a good description of the house and its contents as they struck him.

"I breakfasted with Rogers yesterday. There was nobody there but Moore. We were all on the most friendly and familiar terms possible; and Moore, who is, Rogers tells me, excessively pleased with my review of his book, showed me very marked attention. I was forced to go away early on account of bankrupt business, but Rogers said that we must have the talk out; so we are to meet at his house again for breakfast. What a delightful house it is! It looks out on the Green Park just at the most pleasant point. The furniture has been selected with a delicacy of taste quite unique. Its value does not depend on fashion, but must be the same while the fine arts are held in any esteem. In the drawing-room, for example, the chimneypieces are carved by Flaxman into the most beautiful Grecian forms. The bookcase is painted by Stothard, in his very best manner, with groups from Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Boccaccio. The pictures are not numerous, but every one is excellent. In the dining-room there are also some beautiful paintings. But the three most remarkable objects in that room are, I think, a cast of Pope taken after death by Roubilliac; a noble model in terra-cotta by Michael Angelo, from which he

afterwards made one of his finest statues, that of Lorenzo de' Medici ; and, lastly, a mahogany table, on which stands an antique vase."

Of course Rogers had always been kind to literary aspirants, and rather over-encouraging, if anything, to young writers : so there is nothing surprising in his attitude to Macaulay. Naturally as they saw more of each other, Macaulay's flow of talk became rather tiresome to Rogers, who could not get a word in edgeways. Ten years later Greville was present at a party at Bowood where Macaulay and Rogers were both guests. Macaulay was never silent. " The drollest thing is to see the effect upon Rogers, who is nearly extinguished, and can neither make himself heard nor find an interval to get in a word. He is exceedingly provoked, though he cannot help admiring." It does not give one a high opinion of Macaulay's manners, this boisterous shouting down of an old man, for Rogers was nearing eighty. However Sydney Smith was also present, and though old, was at least as vigorous as Macaulay, and more than a match for him in conversation, as he never tired or bored his hearers, while Macaulay did both.

Mrs. Procter (" Barry Cornwall's " wife), however, remembered a breakfast-party at Rogers' which must belong to an earlier period than this. It should be remembered as an anticipation of Smith's golden age, when Hallam would agree, and Macaulay be silent. She told Lord Houghton that once she was asked by Rogers to meet Macaulay at breakfast. Afterwards she said to her host, " But where was Macaulay ? "—" He sat opposite to you the whole time ! "—" That Macaulay ! Why, I always heard he was a most tremendous talker ! "—" So he is," answered Rogers, " but you see I talked so much myself, that I only left one opening—and that *you* took."

The truth is, that after Macaulay had established his reputation in society, his insistence on monopolizing the conversation was almost intolerable. No doubt there had been other equally profuse talkers; Coleridge would indulge in interminable discourses, but Coleridge, at least, even in his most unintelligible moments, was quite unparalleled. No one else could talk as he talked; his conversation was as original as his mind. But Macaulay was merely an *Encyclopædia* endowed with a voice; he poured forth facts, relevant or irrelevant, until his audience was stunned. His opinions were simply the commonplace opinions of the rank and file of the Whig party; he had not got the aristocratic Jacobinism of Fox or Lady Holland, the humorous Radicalism of Smith, or the cultured Liberalism of Rogers. At forty years of age he held the same prejudices he held at twenty, and held them with the same feeble violence. All his brilliant bluster could not make up for the absence of profound thinking. With Macaulay conversation was not the expression of thought, it was an outlet for memory: "his memory had swamped his mind." Or in that vivid image of Sydney Smith, "Macaulay not only overflowed with learning, *but stood in the slop*." To-day we cannot help thinking that far too much patience, at the expense of others, was held out to the cataract of information with which Macaulay soused and damped his audience; Talleyrand is the only person he is reported to have been nervous of meeting, and of that cynical statesman he did not see enough to check his habits or mend his manners. Of the visit to Bowood that I have just referred to Fanny Kemble records that one morning at breakfast Rogers, having two or three times uplifted his thread of voice and fine incisive speech against the torrent of Macaulay's holding forth, Lord

Lansdowne, the most courteous of hosts, endeavoured to make way for him with a "You were saying, Mr. Rogers?" when Rogers hissed out, "Oh, what I was saying will keep." Mrs. Butler, no doubt, never lets an incident lose any colour in the telling—the "Rogers hissed out" is an instance—but she may be trusted in telling one exactly what happened, though she is rather too fond of ascribing bitterness to Rogers, which may spring from Rogers' habit of telling stories about her father. But she had no prejudice against Macaulay, except the one that was shared by all his acquaintance.

A friend of Rogers' who must have found Macaulay's idea of social intercourse not a little trying was Henry Luttrell, supposed to be the illegitimate son of Lord Carhampton; he was a man who by sheer force of character pushed his way to the front of English society. The claim for supremacy in wit in the London of the first half (or so) of the last century was hotly contested; Rogers, Luttrell, Ward—all have strong champions. Two things Luttrell was famous for, his taste as a gourmet which is a source of endless amusement to the reader of Sydney Smith's letters, and his rivalry with Rogers. Their methods of wit, though dissimilar, were not so far apart as to make comparison unfruitful—as with Rogers and Smith. Charles Greville writes in his diary: "Rogers and Luttrell were always bracketed together, intimate friends, seldom apart, and always hating, abusing, and ridiculing each other. Luttrell's *bon mots* and repartees were excellent, but he was less caustic, more good-natured, but in some respects less striking in conversation than his companion, who had more knowledge, more imagination, and, though in a different way, as much wit."

Of their rivalry—very largely assumed, I take it, for

their own purposes, Smith makes excellent fun, as in his well-known "Rogers was in a very bad humour last night. Luttrell was helped to bread-sauce before him"; but the two wits kept always intimate, and there was no bitterness in their abuse of each other. As a writer of light verse Luttrell has been somewhat unjustly ignored. It is true he cared little for a literary reputation; and Rogers used to regret that "Luttrell gives up nearly his whole time to persons of mere fashion." He praises Luttrell's work quite unstintedly. "Everything that he has written is very clever. Are you acquainted," he asked Dyce, "with his epigram of Miss Tree (Mrs. Bradshaw)? it is quite a little fairy tale:—

> 'On this *tree* when a nightingale settles and sings,
> The *tree* will return her as good as she brings.'"

And again: "Luttrell is indeed a most pleasant companion. None of the *talkers* whom I meet in London society can slide in a brilliant thing with such readiness as he does."

This was evidently spoken while Luttrell was still alive—he did not die till 1851, when he was over eighty-five years of age—and so Rogers' recollections were not softened by the fact of death. His verse written in an album belonging to Wordsworth's daughter are better than the lines Rogers admired. They were an epitaph on a man run over by an omnibus:—

> "Killed by an omnibus—why not?
> So quick a death a boon is.
> Let not his friends lament his lot,
> *Mors omnibus communis.*"

It was Luttrell, too, when Rogers once observed in a rather sententious way, "I sometimes wonder how a man

can ever be cheerful, when he knows that he *must* die," who rapped out a rimed version for his friend :—

> "O death, thy certainty is such
> And thou'rt a thing so fearful,
> That, musing, I have wonder'd much,
> How men were ever cheerful."

When Rogers published the magnificent illustrated *Italy*, "Ah!" said Luttrell, "it would have been dished but for the plates," but we know from a letter of Sydney Smith's that he really appreciated his friend's poem. "Luttrell approves," is Smith's phrase, and that was high praise from the somewhat difficult wit.

Like Rogers, Luttrell always upheld the supremacy of the married life, but with what degree of sincerity is doubtful. "I was really intended for a married man; all my life I had a love for domestic comforts, though passing my time in such a different manner. I am like that King of Bohemia who had, so unluckily, a taste for navigation, though condemned to live in an inland town."

Many of Rogers' friends used to poke fun at his Dissenting upbringing; even Wordsworth once said to him, after they had been together in York Cathedral, and Rogers was praising its solemnity, "You can't admire it properly, Rogers, or feel its effect as I do, because of your Presbyterian training." And once when he was walking with Luttrell along George Street, Hanover Square, Rogers complained of the way in which the projecting steps of St. George's Church forced him off the pavement. "That, my dear Rogers," answered his companion, "is one of your Dissenting prejudices."

It was Luttrell—one must remember that he was a Londoner by choice—who said of the English climate,

"On a fine day, like looking up a chimney; on a rainy day, like looking down one." And in an early letter to Rogers he has reminded posterity, which might otherwise have forgotten it, of what he justly calls the worst lines in the very worst copy of verses in any language. The conclusion of the opening address spoken by Kemble at the inauguration of Covent Garden Theatre in 1809 was as follows :—

> "Solid our building, heavy our expense,
> We rest our claim on your munificence—
> What ardour plans a nation's taste to raise
> A nation's liberality repays,"

and the line which Luttrell holds up for especial reprobation is the first of these four.

Luttrell's published works—*The Advice to Julia* and *Crockford House*—do not deserve the neglect into which they have fallen. They are always fluently and at times very brightly written, and are a most valuable picture of the gambling, "merry" days of which they deal. He had, too, a genuine gift for comic rime, as genuine as Byron's, and more precise, if less spontaneous, as in—

> "Who are returned as sick, and who dead,
> Among the luckless girls excluded,"

or the final lines in this happy little description of the Park on a spring Sunday afternoon :—

> "The enfranchised tradesman, as he stirs,
> Here jostles half his customers.
> Here, in a rage, the Bond Street spark
> Is bearded by his father's clerk;
> While yon proud dame (O sad event!) is
> Out-elbowed by her own apprentice!"

And the following couplet might be adopted as the motto of the Smoke Abatement Society. I make a present of the suggestion to Sir William Richmond.

> "Make all our chimneys chew the cud,
> Like hungry cows, as chimneys should."

The poems are rather tedious in length; they can now only be read for such snatches as I have quoted; but surely it is worth while to read a not over-long, light poem to come on so excellent a description of London as this :—

> "To a tittle
> The place for those who have but little;
> Here I endure no throbs, no twitches
> Of envy at another's riches,
> But, smiling, from my window see
> A dozen twice as rich as he."

CHAPTER XIV

LAST FRIENDS

THE two most typical of English humorists are, perhaps, Charles Lamb and Charles Dickens. Their genius differs by the whole wide difference between a temperament naturally sunny and sweet and a temperament that was rather artificial, theatrical, and at times even sinister. There is in Dickens' baser creations, such figures as Quilp or the horrible Sally Brass, an infernal gleam which is never allowed to flicker across the pages of Elia. But in their quaintness, in their love for the romantic side of the commonplace, in their devotion to the people—for Lamb is essentially democratic—there is much in common between them. Lamb cared nothing for the high society in which Rogers—in spite of his confession to his nephew that he would have been wiser to have followed his father's advice and have nothing to do with the nobility—moved not only with ease but with pleasure; and the two never met very frequently, though they were on friendly enough terms. Lamb acknowledged a gift of Rogers' "Poems"—the illustrated edition. It is a typical example of what such a letter should be, when it was necessary to say "Thank you" nicely to an old gentleman for poems that the recipient can hardly have admired much. Part of it is worth quoting:—

"MY DEAR SIR,—Your book, by the unremitting punctuality of your publisher, has reached me thus early. I have

CHARLES LAMB

FROM THE FIRST SKETCH BY MACLISE FOR "FRASER'S MAGAZINE"

not opened it, nor will till to-morrow, when I promise myself a thorough reading of it. 'The Pleasures of Memory' was the first school present I made to Mrs. Moxon; it had those nice wood-cuts; and I believe she keeps it still.

. . . . . .

"He is no lawyer who cannot take two sides. But I am jealous of the combination of the sister arts. Let them sparkle apart. What injury (short of the theatres) did not Boydell's 'Shakespeare Gallery' do me with Shakespeare? —to have Opie's Shakespeare, Northcote's Shakespeare, light-headed Fuseli's Shakespeare, heavy-headed Romney's Shakespeare, wooden-headed West's Shakespeare (though he did the best in 'Lear'), deaf-headed Reynolds' Shakespeare, instead of my, and everybody's Shakespeare. To be tied down to an authentic face of Juliet! To have Imogen's portrait! To confine the illimitable! I like you and Stothard (you best), but 'out upon this half-faced fellowship.' Sir, when I have read the book I may trouble you, through Moxon, with some faint criticisms. It is not the flatteringest compliment in a letter to an author to say you have not read his book yet. But the devil of a reader he must be who prances through it in five minutes, and no longer have I received the parcel. It was a little tantalizing to me to receive a letter from Landor, *Gebir* Landor, from Florence, to say he was just sitting down to read my 'Elia,' just received, but the letter was to go out before the reading. There are calamities in authorship which only authors know. I am going to call on Moxon on Monday, if the throng of carriages in Dover Street on the morn of publication do not barricade me out.

"With many thanks, and most respectful remembrances to your sister.—Yours, C. Lamb

"Have you seen Coleridge's happy exemplification in English of the Ovidian elegiac metre ?—

'In the Hexameter rises the fountain's silvery current,
In the Pentameter aye falling in melody down.'

"My sister is papering up the book—careful soul."

With Dickens Rogers was really intimate. Mrs. Dickens was a great friend of his, and while he could not approve of Dickens' method of composition, he seems to have admired the liveliness of the novels. Nothing shows so clearly the passing away of Rogers' age and manner of writing, nothing so exhibits the contrast between the old and the new school as the almost terrified disgust with which Rogers refers to certain elements in Dickens' work. The haste with which he wrote was one great source of complaint. It is true Byron wrote hastily and carelessly, and Rogers referred more than once to his friend's slovenly "there let him lay," and the equally, though not so noticeably, ungrammatical "a palace and a prison on each hand"; but Byron was a peer, and never professed to take his writing seriously. Nothing could excuse the way in which Dickens wrote, at least not to the punctilious, blotting Rogers. He complained that nothing to-day was written with care except science, and that once he called on Dickens and found him engaged on a new story. The story had been begun only four weeks before; and in a week's time the printer would be crying out for it.

When Dickens published the *Christmas Carol* in 1843, he sent a copy to Rogers hoping he would like the slight fancy it embodied. But the old man was now beyond appreciating the new genius. He fell asleep over the first half-hour's reading—he must have been a slow reader!—because he found it so dull; the next hour was so painful that he had

to finish it in order to remove the impression. All the material criticism he had to make was a violent attack on Dickens' habit of putting bad grammar in the mouths of his characters, and showing their pronunciation by printing "'orse," and "air" instead of "are." None of our best writers, he complained, do that. I don't quite know who Rogers meant by our best writers, but I have no doubt that Dickens in his pictures of low life was in lineal descent from the man who drew Dogberry and Bottom; and that Shakespeare, however unconsciously, followed the example of Theocritus and Aristophanes. The use of Cockney in writing is just as legitimate as the use of dialect; and we hear no complaint on Rogers' part against the Scotch of Burns.

Rogers had not, it must be acknowledged, the faculty which some old men have of recognizing genius in a guise opposed to what he was used to in his youth and maturity. Landor could perceive the power of Browning; Gladstone's openness of mind, on literary questions, was one of the most marvellous things about that marvellous man; but most old men are storehouses of memory, receptacles of a forgotten, and at times, discredited tradition. Rogers never lost his kindness, never lost his interest in young men who wanted to write literature; but he was anxious that they should follow his ways. He would have had Dickens write *Martin Chuzzlewit* with the same care that went to the composition of *Columbus;* and when the younger generation insisted, as it must, on doing its own work in its own way, Rogers sighed and turned once more to the contemplation of his Raphael and Giorgione, or to con over the pages of his own *Italy*, adorned by the genius of Turner.

Of this time of his life Mrs. Norton has left a charming picture: "He was the very embodiment of quiet, from his

voice to the last harmonious little picture that hung in his lulled room; and a curious figure he seemed—an elegant, pale watch-tower, showing for ever what a quiet port literature and the fine arts might offer, in an age of 'progress,' when every one is tossing, struggling, wrecking, and foundering on a sea of commercial speculation or political adventure: where people fight even over pictures, and if a man does buy a picture, it is with a burning desire to prove it is a Raphael to his yelping enemies, rather than to point it out with a slow white finger to his breakfasting friends."

The graceful form of Mrs. Norton, with her Sheridan beauty and Sheridan charm, links the name of Rogers with that of one who has only just died, George Meredith, who was inspired by her to challenge nature in *Diana of the Crossways*. Mrs. Norton, with her unhappy history and her gentle though intellectual fascination, was the type of woman with whom Rogers was on admirable terms. He was always her friend and admirer, not forgetful of the claims upon him of Sheridan's grand-daughter, but also loving her for the sunlight her presence gave him. He must have tired a little as he grew older of the harsh humour of Lady Holland, and the somewhat caustic wit of Fanny Kemble. He liked gentle women: he was very fond of Thomas Moore's Bessy; and Moore tells us, when he was at Bowood in 1842, he walked over to see her "through all the wretched mud of Bowood Lane, and our own, making, to us and back again, at least six miles"—and he close on eighty. But Bessy was not intellectual, whereas Mrs. Norton was one of the wittiest women in London society. She seems to have treated Rogers as one in whom she could implicitly put confidence, a man to whom she inevitably turned in trouble—not only because of his friendship for her and hers, but also because of his character. She felt he was a refuge from the wretched

turmoil of her life, the quarrel with her husband, the greater rush of modern manners; and she goes to the old man as naturally as she might to her father.

Long before he was an old man, he had shown a fondness for children and the company of children, which, while it may not have been so rare as we think at the beginning of the last century, was certainly not so commonly expressed as it is now; and it was regarded by his friends as a trait altogether estimable but rather unusual in a bachelor. His views about children are far more of our day than of his own, when fathers were still called "Sir," and a distant respect bred in time a sudden disobedience. He used to say that "most people are ever on the watch to find fault with their children, and are afraid of *praising* them for fear of *spoiling* them. Now, I am sure that nothing has a better effect on children than *praise*." It is true at one time he quoted as an instance of this Moore's treatment of his little girl: "Moore was always praising her, and saying, 'What a good little girl,' and she went on growing better, and better . . . until she grew too good for this world and died." But I do not think that this characteristic illustration need make one doubt that the sentiment it is intended to support, was sincere.

He was also very anxious that children should have the benefit of the best environment. "A man should be careful to let the nurses and people about his children when young be persons who speak English with a good accent; a nurse with a provincial dialect will give a whole family habits which they cannot get over all their lives. A man bringing up a family in the country should send for a nurse from town. A father should have engravings after Raphael and the other great masters hanging about in the rooms where his children are, to accustom them early to what is

beautiful. You should always praise your servants or children when they do well; it makes them good, as they wish to deserve the praise; they feel they have a character to lose."

What Rogers would have said had he lived to see the kind of prints which the progress of science enables us to hang in our rooms may be imagined; I doubt if he would have regarded the supreme excellence of some processes any compensation for the enormous increase in cheap and nasty methods of reproduction; and the advent of daily illustrated papers he would regard, from the artistic point of view, as little less than a disaster.

His love for children was not confined to giving good advice, or to the framing of admirable sentiments. Rogers was fond of actual, concrete children: he did not, as do some moderns, make a Cult of the Child, and turn the nursery into a sort of esoteric oratory, from which the noise and laughter of real children must be banished. He liked to have children about him, and once a year at least, on Twelfth Night, he had a grand children's party, with fireworks and other joys for the young. "Oh, the evil hour," he writes to his friend Sharp in 1816, asking him to the party, "in which you and I removed from Lilliput to Brobdingnag; but we may still visit the first now and then as aliens and foreigners."

We have an account of such a party, earlier than this, at which Sharp, Tom Moore, Byron and Boddington assisted. Martin Shee was King of Twelfth Night, and a little girl (who seventy years or so afterwards told Mr. Clayden about that party) was the Queen. Seated solemnly on the sofa, the Boy King and Girl Queen received the homage of their elders. And then Rogers performed conjuring tricks. The whole evening, with its passage from

the pageant and pomp of the Court to the childish games, and the great Twelfth Cake, betrays the mind of a man who understood children, and did not feel it necessary to stoop to, or unbend with them.

"When I am old and bedridden, I shall be read to by young people—Walter Scott's novels, perhaps." This shows a very different Rogers from that tradition of a permanently embittered old gentleman, who cultivated friends in order to censure them, and regarded every new acquaintance as a fresh means for an epigram. That picture, which has survived even Mr. Clayden's excellent volumes, is due very largely to the fact that the good stories of and about Rogers were easily accessible in Dyce and in the literary papers: the stories of his good nature were either unpublished altogether, or hidden in the masses of Moore's diary. It is probable that no one knows the full extent to which he benefited his poorer authors or out of how many scrapes he succeeded in getting his friends. Even against his better judgment he would help a poet, as Campbell, though he told Madame de Staël that the best thing Campbell could do was to take a place as a clerk. He lacked the Bohemian temperament almost entirely; but unlike most people who are lacking in it, he could sympathize particularly with those afflicted with it. All this side of his nature is on a par with his kindness to and fondness of women and children. His view of women is singularly free from either patronage or gallantry; he was polite but never deferential, companionable but never condescending.

His inability to remain open to fresh ideas has its more admirable aspect: it was a sign of a stability of character that stood him in great stead among the rather feather-brained circles in which he sometimes moved. If he lacked the enthusiastic zeal that marked Grattan or Byron,

he was always there waiting for them or any of his more adventurous friends, ready with advice and help and, if need be, money. Rogers was typical of the class, and his intellect was typical of the intellect to which the best Liberal thought of the pre-Victorian era appealed. It was in the expectation of the praise and support of the large body of people that such a man as Rogers represented, that Smith could write the Plymley letters, Fox propose Catholic Emancipation, and Grattan plead the cause of Ireland. There was no uncertainty in the appeal, as the men who made it knew there would be no uncertainty in the response. Not until the sinister figure of Bonaparte blazes across the European sky, is there a sign of division in the best ranks of the Liberal intellectuals on the great questions of the day. No doubt these men erred in supposing issues were as clean-cut, lines of demarcation so well-defined as they believed; but their error was more productive of sound political work than can be any attitude of philosophic doubt or any pose of a cynical pragmatism. You must "hitch your waggon to a star" if you are going to move the minds of men, if you are going to persuade people that politics is any more than a game in which finance and diplomacy play equal, and equally shady, rôles. The politics of the first English Liberals were based on principle, apart from questions of expediency or consequence. We may differ from the principles of Fox, or of Smith, but we cannot deny that their cause gained enormously from the moral weight of their appeal—an appeal that so often went against men's immediate interests, against their prejudices, against their desires, but appealed, as they felt, to the voice of conscience, to the reasons of the heart.

And I feel that in sketching Rogers' character I have

probably not laid enough stress on the determining, and guiding, principle of his life—his religious upbringing and surroundings. It is very difficult for us to-day, with the cry of the "Free Churches," and the clatter of federation, to understand the type of English Dissent for which Rogers stood. Of his Dissent he was neither ashamed, nor aggressively self-conscious, but quietly and firmly proud. I don't know whether he would have been more annoyed or amused if you had confused him with the Methodists. The Presbyterian-Unitarianism to which he adhered was peculiar to England in the settled way in which it existed, in its sobriety, its culture, its keen "intellectualism." Its very heresies were honourable, and sought to get established; its ministers were, on the average, of greater ability than those of the Church, and the descendant of Philip Henry dined with a good conscience at the table of the Archbishop of Canterbury. No imaginative work has dealt, so far as I know, and no historical or biographical work has dealt adequately, with this school of English Dissent. The religion in which Rogers was brought up was far removed from that gloomy sectarianism that we have represented in the Mark Rutherford series of novels, and as far, almost, from that curiously-scented, esoteric Calvinism which we find in Mr. Gosse's *Father and Son*. There was light and air in the religion of Dr. Priestley and Dr. Price; there was, to my mind, far more of Christianity, in spite of the nominal Unitarianism, than in the bodies on which the hand of Calvin still lay, and where little children were equally miserable, whether they were decreed to be damned or were doomed to eternal bliss. It may be said that there was no great direct religious force about the eighteenth-century Unitarians; that their strength lay in intellectual, ethical, and social work. This can only be admitted if we

withdraw from the term religion all that is usually called natural religion. And it must be remembered that for these men the Person of our Lord was far more definitely divine than for many modern Protestants : no criticism had yet really disturbed the portrait in the Gospels, no Mill had proclaimed the words of the Johannine Christ to be indifferent and negligible, and no Nietzsche had suggested that even if the Synoptic portrait was true, it was not adorable.

Lamb was of the same school as Rogers ; and Rogers would no doubt have cried Amen to Lamb's fine saying, "If Shakespeare came into the room we should all stand up; but if He came, you know, we should all kneel." The spirit of orthodox Christianity is there, is it not ?

It may be admitted that the flowers of Christianity did not grow readily in this small body of Christians ; but the devotional literature of Newman and Keble owed a great deal to the soil which the Unitarians had helped to prepare. They stood aloof no doubt from the more distinctly Christian activities of other bodies ; but they were active in the cause of freedom, of truth, and of tolerance—and can that be said of other Christian Communities of that time ? Best of all, this religion, rather severe, but happy and contented, was an enormous help in the development of individual character. Strong men and kind men were produced under its régime. What strength and what real kindness was that which Rogers' brother Henry showed on his death-bed. There was a maid watching by him, and the dying man asked her whether she had ever seen a person die. "No," answered the girl. Henry Rogers then sent her out of the room on an errand, and when she returned, he was dead.

It may be that it was Stoic courage which nerved him to die alone, but it was Christian charity that enabled him to send away the watcher. Of such stuff, too, was Samuel

Rogers. That which was put in the Hornsey Churchyard beside Henry and Sarah Rogers was the body of a man who had been inspired by a very real religion to lead a beautiful life. The Dissent of Rogers' childhood may have had many grave faults; it departed from Christianity, no doubt, in many serious ways; but it had, to a peculiar extent, the spirit of serenity, the atmosphere of a certain untroubled joy that have always been marks of the Christian character. It was not, as was the latent or proclaimed Deism in the Church, false to a Catholic ideal; and was therefore not sapped by that subtle decay which must attack even unconscious dishonesty. Instead of being worse it was better than its professed faith, for it left the logical claims of Calvinism for a sweeter religion, a nearer approximation to the Gospel.

The religion that enabled Rogers, with his many physical ailments, his naturally critical temper, his almost fidgety niceness of temperament, to endure trouble for his friends, to be unstinting in praise, to be over-generous to the careless and the indigent, to retain the love of so wide and so varied a circle of friends, is not a thing to be despised. And when we remember that, through it also, Charles Lamb did what so few men could have done, when he chose to live with his sister sooner than abandon her to the care of the asylum, we may believe that English Dissent, in spite of many developments, has not altogether gained by the virtual extinction of a form of it that bred, out of all proportion to its numerical importance, men with a keen feeling of duty, a high courage in the face of life, and a lofty disconcern at the approach of death.

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